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To Mrs Richardson
from the Author
William C. Fraser

Queensberry House Edinburgh.
17th March 1930.

Margaret Ann Steel

August 21st 1960.

THE YELPIN' STANE

Stories of Scottish Village Life

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THE YELPIN' STANE

Stories of Scottish Village Life

BY

WILLIAM C. FRASER

AUTHOR OF "WHAUPS OF DURLEY"

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TO MY FRIEND

THOMAS FRASER

MAXWELL KNOWE, DALBEATTIE

I have to thank Mr. Thomas Fraser, Dalbeattie, and Mr. John W. Oliver, M.A., Edinburgh, for reading the proofs of this work and for many valuable suggestions.

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THE YELPIN' STANE

CHAPTER I

THE YELPIN' STANE

The Yelpin' Stane, near Arthur's Fountain at the head of the Elfin Burn, is where you can see Glendurley best. The hills enclosing the Gill draw closer as you ascend, till at Elfinhead they meet, and there is no farther road, unless you care to breast the steep brae where the hills close in. Here, if you raise your voice near the well, an answer comes from the Yelpin' Stane. True, it is only a word echoing your own voice—the voice of this lonely spot. It has answered many in the past—now silent—as truly as it echoes the sounds of the present. Often in boyhood I listened to and wondered at the mysterious voice—Nature making herself audible to me. Once, a careless schoolboy, I ventured there by myself; I cried—a sure and ready answer came; the eerie spirit that dwelt among the quiet

hills entered my soul, and I felt its mystic influence. Away from the hum and stir of the village my eyes were opened to the wonder and beauty of the world—never again was it the same to me. I felt the glamour of fairyland, and vague memories of past generations crowded into my mind. It was a sacramental moment, bringing me nearer the God of Nature, thinking with awe on this mysterious world in which we find ourselves. Sixty years after, with a heavier step, I walked up the Elfin Burn, drank once more at Arthur's Fountain, and shouted my name; and the Yelpin' Stane answered as readily and as clearly as it did when I first heard its echoing voice. As I lingered, the mist rolled down the hill-sides, the outside world was blotted out; I was alone as on an island; and the eerie feeling of bygone days returned to my mind. Once more the sense of awe and wonder thrilled my soul. Again I felt the sacredness, the solemnity, the mystery of the place. Now, as then, I felt the inner secret of Nature; and all the wearing years that lay between were blotted out. How long I stood there I know not. The joy of communion with Nature possessed me, till the weird scream of a whaup re-echoed from the

Stane, and I awakened to the world of everyday life. The sun was breaking through the mist, which slowly vanished, and the valley below was unfolded. The grey hills emerged from their misty covering; and soon in the clear sunlight I saw the green fields of my childhood encircled by the heather-clad hills. Clumps of silver birch hid the hill-foots. The river was fringed with glossy green-leaved alders, and in the distance were stretches of dark Scots firs. In the middle of the valley I saw the Durley winding from side to side, ever gathering new strength from the streamlets that bickered down from the heights. I traced its wayward course till, lost in the lirks of the distant hills, it reached a larger stream on its way to wider plains and a great city full of smoke and din, where it joined the sea; and as the water, pure and sparkling, left its upland source, so also, I mused, had nearly all my school companions gone to swell the city crowds, or to carry memories of their early home to distant lands. Yes, to a hasty glance the place was unchanged, but a closer view revealed an important difference—many of the houses had disappeared. Here and there were crumbling walls overgrown with nettles—a sure sign of man's desertion and

neglect, for the nettle flourishes where man once lived: the pirates' treasure in Traprain Law was indicated by a luxuriant crop of them. The heather had crept down from the heights and was eating into the grass; the rushes had risen from the swampy low-lying ground; and the bracken, unprofitably abundant, was gaining mastery over both—useless? No—an excellent cover for fur and feather, and it keeps away sheep and cattle.

However pleasing the Glen might still be, it had lost to me its greatest charm—the people who lived and laboured there. However far the Durley man has wandered, however good or bad his fortune, his early memories remain green, and he delights in telling his children of the Glen he loved and the people he knew. All dream of returning, if only for a day, to the hills and fields they wandered over in early days, and if the visit be made, it is shadowed with regrets when they see the changes time has brought about. Lately I met in the village an old man, who had ventured to revisit the scenes of his youth. Bent with age, he walked with difficulty; his eyes were dim; he could not see distinctly the village he so fondly remembered. A little girl—his grandchild—led

him by the hand. Using her eyes he asked her about the houses and spots he remembered—she saw them not. However, when he named the hills and the river, she could tell him they were unchanged. His old companions had wandered far; and their children only knew the Glen by the tales told by the fireside under distant skies, to eager listening ears.

Once, as I daundered by the Durley Water near where the Elfin Burn comes in, on coming to a sandbed cast up by their meeting, I noticed an old woman peering about in the gravel, and, at times, picking up a trifle. When I asked what she was doing, she looked up, and said, "The hoose where I was born an' brocht up yince stood yonder by the burnside. Ye can see the broken-doon wa's yet amang yon rowan trees. I am lookin' for bits o' my mother's broken cheeny, and here," she said, holding up a coloured fragment, "is a bit wi' the pattern on't I min' sae weel." Like her, I am trying to recall broken memories of the past—genuine as far as they go, but how faintly they picture the charm and joyful life of days gone by.

"When did you hear from the Glen last?" was among the first questions asked when two

old Durley friends met in the busy city, or, at times, in far lands furth of Scotland.

Though they had sought fortune beyond the rim of the distant hills, the memory of the home of their early days remained green. A lonely spot it was—high up in central Scotland. The head waters of a famous river rose there, which gathered strength as it wandered seawards, having a great city at its mouth, from which ships came and went to all the harbours of the world; and as the mountain streamlets achieved greatness by leaving the Glen, the children born in the Glen also gained importance by leaving the hills they first saw the sun rise and set over. Indeed, there was little to induce them to linger when a fuller life beckoned "ower the hills and far away," for the conditions of village life were changed. The discovery of the varied power of steam changed the economic conditions of the country. The railway hastened the break-up of the old village community life.

Once the hand-loom weavers supplied the village needs; when the last—a very old man—left his loom it was broken up as useless lumber. Now one can only tell where he wove strong webs that lasted for years, by the mouldering

foundations of his house, a few ragged rowan trees, and a rich crop of raspberries—dear to every schoolboy; a reminder of the time when every weaver had his plot of rasps, to make reeds for his loom with the canes. The boy who winded the pirns went to attend an engine in a tweed factory, where more cloth was woven in a day than all the looms in Durley could weave in a twelvemonth. The carding-mill, where the woollen rowans were prepared for the spinning-wheel, has given place to mills that employ hundreds. The crofts were eaten up by larger farms; sheep took the place of the cottar's cow on the common land; muirfowl more and more allured sportsmen from afar; and the landowners became rich without effort—the more desolate the moor, the richer the shooting.

Meanwhile, the young were drawn away to the towns, where work was plentiful and better paid and life was fuller in interest. No one could be blamed for this birsing yont the encircling hills: there were no harsh evictions; the young were not forced away unwillingly; those who had already gone and prospered sent glowing accounts of the wages they got and of the hundred new ways of spending their earnings. Some, more

adventurous, went farther afield and fared better, till no lad of spirit was content to till the soil or handle sheep and cattle as his father had done. As this goes on there will be fewer and fewer to burst the fetters and find fortune in days to come. The trend of our youth to the less healthy conditions of the towns, and to add vigorous life to states beyond the seas, makes a weaker stock of men. Though those who emigrate are improved, they are lost to their native land.

Once while I was sitting with a farmer by Ettrick side, he pulled some fine stalks of cock's-foot grass and handed them to me, saying :

" This grass is grown from New Zealand seed. We sent seed, and the grass improved so much that now we get our best seed sent from there."

Nor is it different with the men we send out. At the close of the war, as I was going along a quiet back street in Edinburgh, I saw a group of children, and heard a raucous voice singing. As I drew near I saw a Bantam soldier in uniform standing unsteadily in the middle of the street ; and leaning against a gate was a big, strong, good-humoured Australian soldier. The Bantam was singing a long, lugubrious song, such as

soldiers delight in. I remember two lines, which came as a chorus at the end of each verse :

> Australia, I love you
> As a mother loves her child.

If such hefty warriors returned to repeople our glens, Scotland would indeed flourish. I am saying nothing new ; all deplore the outward trend of village life. How to change all this I do not pretend to know, but in the chapters that follow I wish to recall the charms of village life as I knew it—" 'Tis sixty years since."

THE ROUP

CHAPTER II

THE ROUP

Mr. Saunders had taught three generations of Durley children, and the news of his death sent a wave of sympathy throughout the parish. The feeling was not altogether one of regret. He had lived long and found life pleasant to the close. Now the Maister's hands were folded in rest, and the scholars called to mind pleasing pictures of him in and out of school, and in pensive melancholy talked of his kindly words and deeds. Many wished they had vexed him less when alive, and lamented that, even to the last, they had neglected to assure him of their heart-felt gratitude and respect.

The most frivolous mind is solemnised in the presence of death, the most callous heart is softened in the icy presence, and all agree in regretting that the last chance of saying a kindly word is past. "He was a thochtfu' man, the Maister;

a'body could get on wi' him," said auld Laird Belstane, the last of the portioners whose fathers used to meet at the Birley Knowe to settle all disputes about the pasture held in common.

"That's a true word," replied Peggie Baillie, "for yin ye'll get better, ye'll get a hunner waur."

"Aweel, he's gane," interposed Sandy Dempster, who was standing near, "an' oor time's comin'. It'll be a guid thing for us if we're as weel prepared."

In this way the worthy old man was talked of, and when the earth lay heavy on his coffin all felt somehow that the world had grown dimmer and colder—that a man rich in all the gentle virtues and genial humanities had passed from their midst. If all he left behind could have been as reverently put aside, the memory of his end would have been more seemly; but his heir (a nephew, who did not even come to the funeral) sent word that everything was to be sold by auction on the earliest convenient day; and though that day has long passed away it left behind a discordant feeling, the memory of which disturbs me still.

Cold blew the November wind, the bare trees shivered in the biting blast, withered leaves

rustled on the ground, sullen clouds darkened the sky, as the villagers gathered round the dismantled home. The blinds were torn down, no smoke came from the chimney; all thought of the darkened hearth and the vacant chair. There was a good muster of old acquaintances at the roup. Nearly all came to bid for some relic of the Maister, but their faces were clouded and an unwonted silence reigned. Laird Belstane had a shadow on his jovial face, the minister looked as if he were in the pulpit, and the children had never been so quiet when under the school roof.

When the jolly auctioneer, looking round, saw the shadows on faces seldom sad, he cried, "You look as if you had come to my funeral." It certainly was not a cheerful company—the very dogs felt it was an ominous crowd and hung about in a dejected manner, denying themselves the fierce delight of fighting. The furniture was put in the play-ground and, reft from its place, looked dingy and forlorn. The rooms, formerly so neat and comfortable, were dismantled and dishevelled—torn patches of paper hanging from the walls—bits of broken plaster where nails had been roughly drawn out—panes of glass broken and woefully dim—the floor (the pride

of Jenny's heart) a litter of straw and torn paper —the wood marked with the heavy tread of hob-nailed boots.

The bidding went on in a dull, disheartened fashion—all felt it was unseemly to jest and jeer at the poor battered fragments. The chairs looked bright and firm when Jenny had the marshalling of them. She knew their weak points, every one, and took care that none should be tried with a burden heavier than it could bear. Now every pitiable defect was baldly displayed and rudely commented on by the salesman, who was striving to raise the spirits of the bidders. The carpets, in which the most worn parts had ever modestly shrunk from notice, now appeared to be more faded and ragged than they really were. The sofa—a grand thing in the rustic estimation—had a worn, anxious, pleading look. "Be careful how you sit on me," it seemed to say, "I'm no sae strong as I used to be." The big chair ran up to a high figure, and finally fell to Dick Tinto, who exclaimed in triumph, "I've gotten the Maister's chair onyway, get wha likes his lair." Everything was sold—even the tawse. When that well-worn promoter of peace and learning was held up, a titter went round amongst

those freshest from its sharp, stinging discipline, which was speedily suppressed by the older people; and when the new teacher offered sixpence no one ventured to outbid him, and several hands were thrust forward offering to make him a present of that much-needed aid to learning.

Meanwhile, old Robbie Lindsay, the shoemaker, was standing near, his coat off, his shirt sleeves rolled up, and his well-worn leather apron wrapped round his waist, waiting till the books were put up—he loved books as a miser loves gold. To possess and read books was to him the highest pleasure. He took his food like stoking an engine, and was as indifferent about dress as a badly clothed scarecrow; but tell him there was a book sale near at hand and an unwonted interest flashed into his face.

He looked strangely out of place among the bare hills, where the shepherds and crofters were broad-chested, loud-voiced, and weather-tanned. In appearance he looked, as he was, a town-bred man, thin and shilpit, with bent shoulders and shambling gait. His mild blue eyes had a timid, imploring glance, yet they were bright and intelligent, lighting up his pale, thoughtful face. The villagers did not know what to make of

him. Robbie was an oddity, a character, a man by himself, a canny, "harmless creatur'," ever helpful in word and deed, ever helpless in the storm and stress of life, not likely to succeed in any project, careless of success, seeking only to add ever to his knowledge, though it might bring further sorrow. He envied not Solomon's glory, but his learning; and the shadow of the Royal Pessimist was his companion through life. Mr. Saunders and he had much in common, but they had seldom met. Robbie, with possibly finer qualities, had fought a harder battle and gained less; yet he enjoyed life more than many who pitied him. No one ever heard him complain that he had got less than his deserts.

The books lay on the ground, tied up in parcels. A swift glance showed to him which were desirable, and he waited patiently till the precious lots were put up. At length the auctioneer, having disposed of the more-coveted articles of furniture, came to the books. "Who bids for these?" he bawled, holding up a bulky parcel. "They need no recommendation of mine," he added with a laugh, "they seem to have been well used." And certainly they did not look inviting to a fastidious book-lover.

Robbie, however, knew, as the Maister had known, their worth. "Who says sixpence?" cried the salesman. Robbie nodded. "And tuppence," broke in the Crimp Cramp Dominie. Again old Lindsay bent his head, with a look of rising interest in his face.

"I'll gie a shilling, man," a small piping voice cried from somewhere near the ground. But the auctioneer was gazing on the rival book-hunters, and the hidden voice was unheard or unheeded.

"Wheesht, laddie," said someone in the crowd, "rin away and play yoursel' like a wee man," and the parcel was quickly knocked down to the old man, who soon had it torn open, and was so deep in a dingy, badly bound volume that he did not notice the handsome, calf-bound folio which was held up.

"I'll gie a shilling, man," cried the same small voice from amongst the bystanders' feet. The auctioneer looked in the direction of the sound, the crowd opened up, and disclosed a little bare-headed, bare-footed, lean shrimp of a boy.

"It's the Speldrin nae less," cried Dick Tinto. "He maun get the book—he wants it to strap his razor on."

The loud laugh caused by this sally made Robbie look up, not a moment too soon. A fine volume of Alexander Ross was held up. "One shilling is bid," shouted the auctioneer, catching the old man's eye, "one shilling, going, going——"

"And sixpence," hastily interposed the bookworm.

"Hae, laddie! keep the puddin' het," whispered a good-natured farmer to the Speldrin, thrusting a handful of coppers into his hand. The boy, abashed by the publicity thrust upon him, held down his head, and the folio was knocked down to Lindsay, who was deep in the precious volume when the next parcel was held up. "Now's your time, laddie," cried the auctioneer, looking kindly to the boy, "mak' a bid."

The ready answer came, "A shilling, man."

"Gone." The Speldrin became the proud possessor of the books, and soon he was sitting on the ground looking them over, with a keen look on his thin, eager face.

Meanwhile the bidding went merrily on. This little incident had thawed the subdued spirits of the listless group, and some, who came

only to see, began to bid. Soon their voices roused Robbie, and, laying aside his book, he offered for the next lot. The Speldrin, however, was egged on to trap him, and the bidding continued amid laughter till the boy, gaining courage, ventured his all and secured the dusty treasure. Robbie was too intent on acquiring more books to notice who his opponent was, and so the sale went on till all was sold.

The idlers strolled away, many of them to the Bruce Arms Inn to drink a final cup of kindness in memory of their old teacher—the Dredgie, as this is called, after a funeral; and the new owners of the Maister's household plenishing bustled about, removing to their own homes what long had made his a pleasant dwelling-place.

MOSES FOPPERBECK

CHAPTER III

MOSES FOPPERBECK

ROBERT LINDSAY, having carried his purchases home, returned like an unquiet spirit to see the deserted house, and ponder with pensive joy the incidents of the sale. As he sauntered along his attention was directed to a boy struggling with two bundles of books, which were too heavy for him to carry. The old man gazed eagerly at them, as the boy carried one for a short distance, laid it down and went back for the other, which he then took a little farther than the former; in this fashion he was slowly making his way from the School-house. If it had been other than books the old man might have passed on unheeding, but the sight of the volumes being too much for him, he stopped and asked:

"Where are you takin' the books, laddie?"

"Hame," was the ready reply.

"Hame!" ejaculated Robbie. "Wha's aught them?"

"They're mine," piped the small voice proudly.

"What are you going to do with them?" queried the bookworm.

"Read them, to be sure," was the quick response.

Lindsay bent down and hurriedly glanced over the titles.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, with rising wonder, "this is a parcel of Latin books."

"Do ye tell me that? Ken ye ocht o't yoursel'?"

Robbie selected a volume of Horace, read a few lines, and then went on to construe them.

The boy listened with wonder and delight.

"Have you a book like that?" he inquired eagerly.

"I'm sorry to say mine is no sae guid a copy."

"Weel, if ye like," went on the youthful book-lover, slowly scratching his head and looking keenly at the aged scholar, "ye can come and read bits o' it—whiles, if ye let me hear ye readin'."

The old man looked up and laughed; a weary look overspread his face. "The increase of knowledge is the increase of sorrow," he sighed, and then, "What's your name?"

"Ebenezer Bryden, if ye please. I leeve at the Knap wi' my Auntie Tibbie."

"You'll end before you mend, Ebenezer, or I'm sairly mistaken," he said, and sauntered away, muttering something in an unknown tongue, while the boy, much refreshed, resumed his task.

The Knap was a small croft, and there he was being brought up by his aunt, his parents being dead. She had taken him in charge and was bent on bringing him up to be a credit to his upbringing and a help in farm work. A stern disciplinarian was Tibbie—a sworn foe of idleness, untidiness, and all thriftless and improvident conduct, wonderfully indifferent to the genial arts which soften and enliven human life. To her, existence was a serious matter—an unceasing struggle to pay one's way.

She was a brisk, bustling little body, industrious as an ant and as attentive to her proper work. Her pride was to keep everything in the best possible order—to allow no speck of dust on the chairs—no stain of muddy foot to remain on the floor—to have the fire-irons unsullied with rust, and to compel Ebenezer to be as neat as a soldier on parade. This last was no easy task, she said, as he was never out of mischief, never to be

trusted out of her sight, never to be got when wanted, and cared for nothing but confusing his brains and blearing his eyes in reading every scrap of printed paper that fell in his way. This being the case, we need not wonder that Ebenezer got a hot reception when he came panting to the door.

"What's this o't?" roared Tibbie, as she gazed wrathfully at his burden. She was baking, and her bare arms were covered with flour and her face flushed with the heat of a strong fire. "Where are ye bringin' that trash, I wad like to ken?"

"It's books I bocht at the Maister's roup," he replied bravely.

"Have ye clean lost your seven senses a'thegither, harlin' here a wheen ragged, moth-eaten, superannuated rubbish like that? Mony a beggar man wad be ashamed to be seen wi' the like o' them. Where are ye gaun to pit them? My faigs! they'll set off the kitchen dresser; that will they."

"Robbie Lindsay says they are guid books," persisted Ebenezer sullenly.

"Robbie Lindsay," she snorted contemptuously. "Ye're a bonnie pair, as the cuddie said when it saw its lugs in the mill-dam."

"The scones are burnin'," burst in Ebenezer

hurriedly, and she hastened to the fire to turn them.

While she was busy he slipped in and sat down on his cutty stool, and began untying the parcels.

"Have ye had ony meat?" she cried abruptly, a few minutes later.

"I canna exactly say that I have."

"Weel, there's your denner—and if ye dinna sit up and eat it this very identical meenute, off it's whippit to the soo. That pits me in mind; the auld clocker's lost. She wasna on the bauks this mornin'; I doot the tinklers maun hae nippit her."

Ebenezer at once sat down to his dinner. He knew that the threat was no idle one, and he ate so heartily that his aunt's mood was softened. Perhaps there are few more certain ways of reaching a housewife's heart than to relish the food that is set before one. After a little, and when the dishes were cleared away, she relented so far as to allow him to stow his books in the bole-hole—a deep, square recess near the fire in the solid wall, where she kept her Bible and specs, Boston's *Crook in the Lot*, and the unfinished stocking she was ever busy knitting in the intervals of heavier work.

The loss of her favourite hen filled Tibbie's mind and she had no heart left to give her very unfavourable opinion of lazy, handless lovers of books. She had lost the best layer that ever clucked and cackled in her steading, the clocker that had mothered many a goodly cleckin of chicks and ducklings.

Ebenezer had no words of comfort to offer; the matter called for deeds, not words. His mind turned to his friend and confidant, Charlie Robison, and slipping out quietly, when her back was turned, he set off in the direction of the Tounheid. Alike in a love of adventure—working mischief, Tibbie called it—the two boys were strongly contrasted. Ebenezer, the Speldrin as he was called, had the thin and dried-up appearance of that toothsome fish. He was small for his age, pale-faced, blue-eyed, fair-haired, and had no great appetite for farm work. Let others rejoice in the changing tasks of the fourfold year: give him a quiet nook in the chimney corner beside a roaring fire, with a book on his knee.

"If ever his ghost was seen," the neighbours said, "it would be with a book in its hand."

There was a dreamy, far-away look about him when he mixed with others, and he liked to clinch

an argument or suggest a line of conduct by the words, "I read it in a book."

Charlie, on the contrary, was a fat, ruddy boy, with dark curly hair, bright eyes, and a smiling face. Clever with his hands, fertile in expedients, boisterous in his mirth, delighting in the open air, he was the dullest and most inattentive scholar that ever carried a peat to Durley School. Day after day the Maister had assailed him with hard words and resounding blows, but in vain—his brains had all gone to his hands and feet. But Ebenezer was rich where he was poor, and was always ready to impart his knowledge to his stolid friend, and Charlie often obtained hints in this way which he was not slow to carry into practice. When Ebenezer wanted to talk over the wonders he had read in a book, who was a better listener than Charlie? When he wanted help in matters beyond the printed page Charlie's brain, that slept in school, brightened up, and he quickly found a way.

As Ebenezer was stepping westwards in the direction of the village, he heard the Happer threshing mill at work, and turned down by the mill-race, so as to get a good view of the huge water-wheel. He liked to see it turning round

and round—to see the bright water splashing merrily on the wooden shelves. Inside he knew they were busy at work. That was no attraction to him, nor was he an enthusiast in mice-catching or rat-killing, though Charlie would have ventured in, keen on sport. Possibly Charlie was there; if so, he must wait, as Charlie's whole mind would be taken up with the matter in hand.

As he drew nearer the deafening sound his mind was called away from the mill by cries for help, at once vigorous and noisy. Near at hand was a blind beggar, Moses Fopperbeck, who at times wandered into Durley Glen asking, almost demanding, help at every door. He was greatly in need of help now, for he was carrying a well-filled sack and stumbling along between the mill-race and the river, while the thresher was thundering on his right, and carts, bulky with sheaves, were passing on his left. Confused and angry he stood bellowing with fear.

"Help me oot, some yin, help me oot! Do ye no see that I'm blin'? I'll be killed, I'll be killed. Is there nae kin' frien' to len' me a han'? I hear a laddie's fit near; come away, my bonnie man, an' help a puir auld dune creatur'."

"Here I am; tak' a guid grip o' me," said the

boy, stepping up to Blin' Moses, who at once seized him by the shoulder, and, holding him as in a vice, growled in a threatening tone :

" Tak' me on to the turnpike road, an' min' your feet ; if ye tak' me wrang, guid pity ye. Speak to him, Kelt," he said to his dog, and the ill-natured terrier showed his teeth and gurred in a threatening manner. This was more than Ebenezer bargained for. Nevertheless, he did not hesitate to obey the imperious old man. " An' wha may ye be, an' where do ye bide ? " queried Moses.

A ready answer was given to his questions, and to many more about the people and the places as they walked through the village.

The blind man having got the use of a pair of eyes, took care to use them as fully and as long as possible. Ebenezer was fidgeting to get away, but when he found that the boy was in a hurry Fopperbeck gave the terrier a hint, and the cur snarled and brought his teeth unpleasantly near the boy's bare legs ; and when he made any attempt to get away the beggar tightened his grip.

The Speldrin began to get frightened. He had read *Sinbad the Sailor*, and a gloomy picture formed in his mind of ending his days an un-

willing slave to this formidable old tyrant. He used to fret at his aunt's authority, but he had fallen into the clutches of a much harder master, and he resolved to take the first chance of making his escape. But what chance was there? They were nearing the Bruce Arms Inn when he saw Charlie with the water hose in his hand, playfully squirting water on the poultry. As they passed, the dog on one side of him the blind man on the other, Charlie looked with wonder at the trio. The time had come; and Ebenezer, rising to the occasion and putting on a frightened look, pointed to Moses and, as his friend gazed doubtfully, cried out, "Poor oot! poor oot!" Charlie grasped the situation and at once directed the hose straight at the old rascal's face, deluging him with water. Moses lifted his hands to protect himself, and at the same time the bag, falling from his back, gave a sound when it fell, and Ebenezer made his escape. Meanwhile the hose played steadily on man and dog and they jumped wrathfully about. Moses felt that he was being tricked and his humble demeanour vanished. He became truculent, violent, and abusive. His face flushed with rage; he gnashed his teeth, and snapped, and growled, like a cornered badger,

and then words came hot and hissing, "The Almighty made a man when He made me; He didna mak' a fule, an' ye'll no mak' a fule o' me neither."

Meanwhile the viragos of the village gathered round, telling Charlie to "drap it this moment." He resisted the temptation to give them a sprinkling, flung down the hose, and prepared for flight. "Ay, ye twa impident whaups!" cried Peggie Baillie, "I'm fair black affronted to think ye were born an' bred in Durley, to torment a decent, harmless, innocent, helpless—infernal, auld thievin' rascal." She ended with a changed voice, for in the middle of her tirade there was a movement in the bag, and aroused by the sound of her voice, her favourite hen crept wearily out. She had been mourning her loss all the day.

There had been a raid during the night, and more than one Durley hen-roost had suffered. A gang of tinkers that had been prowling about had been suspected; their baggage had been searched, but nothing had been found. Now all was clear. Moses had been made the bearer of the spoil. Who could suspect an old blind man? Now the mystery was explained; and what cries of grief and rage rose from the women,

as they saw their favourites drawn from the bag, some cold and stiff, others feebly flapping their ruffled wings (they must have been very tough). Among the latter Ebenezer joyfully recognised his aunt's clocker,—changed indeed, all the spirit crushed out of her—but still living. He soon had her in his arms, and hurried home with her, glad that he was bringing comfort to his Aunt Tibbie, who was sitting alone in her grief; and the joy with which she welcomed him with his precious burden made up to him for many different receptions he had received. She admitted there was something in him after all. He was a fell yin.

THE CLOCKER

CHAPTER IV

THE CLOCKER

WHEN Ebenezer carried home the hen in triumph, great was his aunt's delight. He had found her sitting mourning her loss with no chance of comfort, and indeed it was a serious matter. She was collecting a setting of eggs, and without the clocker knew not what to do. After a few days' rest the hen was put to her regular work; unfortunately Tibbie had caught a severe cold, and, as the hen-house was some distance from the steading, Ebenezer was given full charge to see that the hen was attended to. On previous occasions he had been entrusted with tasks of this kind and had done his work faithfully.

His adventure had given him a keen interest in the tough old bird. Moses Fopperbeck had subdued her spirit; she was less inclined to strut about, and seldom left the nest; she sat in a disconsolate, dejected manner, the look of careful maternity absent from her appearance.

"This will never do," he thought. "She maun be cheered up after her fricht."

Now among the books he had bought at the Maister's roup was a French one, with many fine illustrations, on hatching eggs artificially by heat. From the pictures he guessed the text, but, to make sure, he got the book, and, slipping it into his pocket, ran away to show it to Robbie Lindsay, who could read any book that ever was printed. He wanted to know the contents of the book, but he had no thoughts of taking the old man into his confidence.

"Here's a book!" he cried, as he entered the old man's room; "I want ye to explain the pictures."

Lindsay took the book and regarded it with interest.

"It's a book on the hatching of chickens by artificial heat," he said. "It is well written, and the plates are very fine."

"Does it tell ye hoo the thing is dune?"

"Yes, it explains the illustrations."

"Could onybody do't?" asked the boy.

"Yes, the principle is simple enough. Eggs are hatched by heat. If the same heat is given as the hen gives, the result will be the same.

The eggs of the ostrich are hatched by the heat of the sun. If the sun were as strong in our country as in the desert, we could do the same here, but it is simpler to hatch them by the hen."

"Still it could be dune here, if the heat was gi'en."

"Certainly, if a uniform heat was applied, the same result would follow."

"Then, if a hen got lazy, ye could pay her off, and bring oot the chickens in spite of her?" asked Ebenezer anxiously.

"Yes, but the hen is not likely to neglect her work. Instinct is a marvellous thing," and he went on to give the boy some instances of the wonders of the animal world.

Perhaps, for the first time, Ebenezer listened impatiently to the old man. He was eager to get away. He had made up his mind to try the Frenchman's system, but was quite willing to give the hen all the credit. When he got home, he went to the stable, where the unfortunate mother was sitting dejectedly over her charge. The manger where the eggs were set was of iron, built in with stone, and there was a press under it with an iron door. It was filled with straw, which

he removed, and, getting a candle, he lighted it and shut it up in the press, and, thus having begun his great experiment, he went off to bed. The first thing in the morning was to run and see how things were progressing. All was going well. She was sitting comfortably on the eggs, and the candle had burned out. He must get more candles, and, having a few coppers, he went and bought some. Day after day passed, but the chickens failed to come out, and the hen seemed to be losing interest. He resolved to increase the temperature and, at a great expense for him, he kept the hatchery going in heat. Still the chickens were slow to appear. He must put on more heat, and, to get the means, he swapped many of his choice treasures with Charlie Robison. Now Charlie, for some undivulged purpose of his own, had been making mould candles, and the tempting offer made to him induced him to niffer the greater part of them to his friend, all the more that he believed Ebenezer had some new ploy in hand and would soon feel the need of taking him into his confidence.

Meanwhile, Tibbie was kept to the house with a cold and had to leave all the outside work to the boy. Daily she asked about the clocker and

at last began to wonder that no chickens had appeared.

"There's maybe a want o' heat in the puir clocker," she said sadly, "and the setting would fail to be forced to the breaking point."

Ebenezer thought that too, but now that fuel was plentiful he became prodigal in its use. He increased the candle power and kept the nest in a fine genial heat night and day. Indeed, at times, he got up during the night to replenish the hen furnace. But there is a time for chickens asserting themselves, and Tibbie, with all her trust in the boy's cleverness, felt that the time had come and something more, so with the help of a neighbour she went to see the stubborn setting. There sat the clocker quite contented, and there lay the eggs as whole as when she set them there. Having shooed the hen off her nest, she lifted an egg and shook it, but it was solid and gave no sign of life. She lifted another—still the same. Then she carefully broke one. The egg was as hard as if it had been hard-boiled.

"Megsty me!" she exclaimed, "did ever onybody see the like o' this? The egg's fair roasted."

"The clocker maun hae sutten awfu' constant,"

said her friend. "I ken weel that a hen can lay an egg, but I never heard o' it bein' able to cook yin." Filled with this wonder, she hastened away to tell the news, and soon some of the neighbours clustered round to view the miracle. The more they considered the matter, the more the wonder grew. Never had such a thing been heard of before. It was something by ordinary; the hen must have been witched; the blin' man must have cast a glamour over the creature. This seemed to the older women the most plausible explanation. The minister, a shrewd, worldly-wise, old fellow, heard of the wonder and, leaving his sermon half written, hurried to see with his own eyes the clocker.

"Now we'll get the affair redd up," they cried; "he's a dungeon o' wut an' learning," for they had often found him a very present help in time of trouble, loosening knots they were unable to untie.

A parish minister acts in many capacities, being skilled, or believed to be skilled, in many arts. A man of an ingenious turn of mind, with a fair share of the world's leisure, if not much of its wealth, learns to turn his hand to many things. Dr. Skinner, among other matters, had devoted

some of his leisure to rearing domestic fowls, and they helped him to eke out his stipend, when the Fiars prices were low. Once he had taken a sick hen of Laird Belstane's in charge, and, after he had administered a powerful medicine, she had clucked feebly, stumbled a few steps blindly, turned on her back, flung up her legs in the air, and died. Perhaps the physic, like Ebenezer's fire, had been too strong; but the best of men and ministers err at times, and he did it for the best. Once, when a villager was ill, the minister failed to visit him, and the sick man's wife said, "If ye had been yin o' the Laird's hens he wad hae come quicker." Her ailing husband groaned, "Gin he's gaun to treat me as he did the hen, I houp he'll stay away," and, as the picture of the unhappy hen rose before his mind, he laughed away his trouble. Now, when the minister bustled up to the Knap and heard their story, he put on his specs, seized the hen, turned her up and down, and saw the feathers singed. "Bless me!" he cried, "she's nearly roasted." He felt the nest—it was warm; then, putting his hand on the iron door below, he threw it open and—there were the tell-tale candles.

"You young rascal!" he roared, as he eyed

the shrinking Speldrin. "We know where you were born, but we don't know where you will be hanged."

"What do ye mean, ye vagabond?" cried Tam Turpie, the smith.

"I was helpin' the clocker to bring oot the cleckin. I read it in a book," gasped the boy.

"Damn books!" bellowed Tam, "they're fu' o' mischief as an egg's fu' o' meat. Bring it doon to the Smiddy, an' we'll see if it'll burn."

Things were getting hot for the Speldrin, so he prudently slipped away, and ran to a favourite spot among the hills at the head of Glenelfin, and only felt safe when under the shade of the Yelpin' Stane, a quiet and solitary place above and beyond the noise and bustle below. In the distance the valley of the Durley lay till it was lost in the bendings of the hills. It was a spot the silence of which always impressed him with a feeling of awe. Here he often indulged in the luxury of reading and day-dreaming. This time, however, his thoughts were far from pleasant. He loved books, but, taking their guidance, had been led astray, and now the egg book had taken away his character. How could he face his Aunt Tibbie? Only by promising to abjure these mis-

leading guides for all time to come. The thought was not a pleasant one, but seemed the only way out of the trouble.

As he sat gazing down the valley, where the Durley ran steadily on to the great cities and the wide sea, his thoughts went "o'er the hills and far away." Yes, he also, like the river, might leave the hills and seek his fortune in some distant city, as so many of the boys in the Glen had done. Thinking thus, he heard a step, and, looking up, wondering who was likely to come where he was, saw a man, a stranger, coming to him. Looking up from a book he was reading and noticing the boy, he said, "Can you tell me anything about this place? It looks like an ancient battlefield from the cairns scattered about."

"Glen Elfinheid," replied the boy, "and I'm sitting beside the Yelpin' Stane."

There was something inviting in the questioner's appearance, and soon Ebenezer had told him of his unlucky attempt to be helpful. "I was led into mischief wi' a book, but I maun gie up readin' or I'm likely to be hanged, the minister says."

"No, no," said the other, "you must learn

to read to better purpose. Now what can you tell me about the Glen here?"

"I ken it's where I like fine to be; it's like the kirk, but far better."

"I feel that too, and I'll tell you what reading might teach you. Long ago the Druids seem to have worshipped here, and later the Romans passed and fought their way north. The Celts and Saxons contended for mastery, and have left their mark in place-names still remembered. Again there are echoes of the Covenanting struggles."

"Where can I learn aboot a' that?" cried Ebenezer eagerly.

"Books can help you as they have helped me. Do you know anything of Latin?"

"I've picked up some words when the big laddies get their Latin lesson."

"You must take lessons too, and I'll go with you and speak to your aunt."

The boy was glad to get someone to shield him from his aunt's stormy reception, and when they got to the house he lingered at the door while the other went in and tackled the much-tried old woman. "Excuse me," he said, "I am much interested in an experiment your boy has been trying."

"The idle impident whaup, I'll experiment him. He'll no mak' a fule o' ma clocker again in a hurry. He's set the hale countryside laughin' at me, an' the hen's got sic a scoutherin she can neither gang nor sit."

"Yes; the experiment failed, but nearly succeeded. Could you let me see the book?"

"Come in by," she cried to the boy, who was creeping nearer the door. "Ye superannuated monkey, get the gentleman the book this meenit."

Ebenezer ran, got the erring volume, and handed it to the stranger, who took it with interest, which increased as he turned over the pages.

"This," he said, "is a valuable book which I have long wished to see. I'll give you five pounds if you'll sell it to me."

Probably the book was worth only a few pence, but Mr. MacRitchie, who wanted to help the boy, knew how to reach her heart. "The boy," he said, "only needs to know better to do better. You can use this for his education."

"I can pay for that as I've been doin', I'll lay it by till he has mair sense." Thus the bargain was made; Ebenezer was taken into favour and

got permission to read in the Latin class, and, although he was often twitted about the clocker, he could afford to be laughed at. He had made a small fortune, and books were shown to be of use after all.

CHARLIE ROBISON CRUSOE

CHAPTER V

CHARLIE ROBISON CRUSOE

A SPELDRIN is a small stock-fish, split, salted, and sun-dried. It is thin and tough, being mostly skin and bone, and needs to be chewed with great patience. This makes the eater so thirsty that he will call out for something to drink. The old innkeepers in Edinburgh knew this well, and always kept a free supply of the dainty for their customers, who had leisure in those days to raise a thirst. We seldom see the speldrin now; no one can spare the time to chew it properly. A look at Ebenezer Bryden was enough to explain why he was called the Speldrin. He was so small and wizened, so tough and sapless, that the very sight of him was enough to call up the thought of that hard, dry, tasty mouthful.

The boy was nothing to look at, a thin, chalk-faced, tow-haired urchin, careless in his dress, which Tibbie made more for use than show.

Timid and backward in his manner, he looked a poor creature beside his strong, red-cheeked schoolmates. All the same, the inside of his head was better furnished than theirs. He lived in a fuller, a braver world, filled with the glamour of romance, where knights in armour fought for fair ladies, and all the showy rascals of sea and land killed and robbed and played the devil in such a way as to make the career of the pirate and highwayman the only one fit for any high-spirited boy. When he told the stories he had read or dreamed, his companions listened with wonder, and, though they hated books, they liked to hear the Speldrin tell about the stirring deeds he found in them.

When they met together for a talk Eben was easily first—the rest nowhere. He had picked up among some musty volumes of forgotten sermons at the Knap a much-thumbed copy of *Robinson Crusoe*. The back was strongly sewn with well-waxed cobbler's thread, brown with age, rounded at the corners with frequent reading ; coverless, without beginning or end, printed in old-fashioned type, and illustrated with queer old woodcuts. " Burn the libraries," the boys might have said, " for their value lies in this

book." One summer this work was never out of the Speldrin's pocket except when it was in his hand.

Many a talk they had over Crusoe's life in his island, one and all thinking him the luckiest of men. Charlie Robison, who knew little about books and cared less, was quite carried away with the story, and argued that if he had such a chance he could improve in many ways the plans of his famous namesake. Charlie was no scholar—had no desire to be—and showed a great deal of ingenuity in keeping his brain clear of the cobwebs of learning. Strong and good-natured, his bent was practical, and he often carried out plans which Ebenezer conceived or read about in books.

One sunny afternoon, as Eben was loitering home from school, Charlie, who had been absent, suddenly jumped over the drystane dyke and bawled out :

" Hillo, Speldrin."

" Hillo, yoursel'," was the speedy response.

" Where's the book ? "

" Whatna book ? "

" The yin aboot me, to be sure."

" I ken o' nae book aboot you except the

book o' judgment, where there's an account keepit o' a' the days ye trone frae the schule."

"They maun be keen o' writin' to fash themsel's aboot me," gloomed Charlie, "when they might be reading about Robison Crusoe. Let's hear a bit."

His friend pulled out the ragged volume, and, sitting down under the shelter of an elder bush, they were soon in that island of the blest, where the immortal sailor was a law to himself and every living creature within hail.

This was the beginning of many pleasant days. Charlie's interest never flagged; every detail was stamped upon his mind. He no more dreamed of doubting the truth of every word than he would the Bible.

One fine summer day—it was a Saturday—Charlie was early astir, and seized upon Eben before his eyes were properly opened.

"Can ye gie the auld yin the slip?" asked Charlie eagerly.

"Easy that. Where are ye gaun?"

"Wait at Paddy's Bed and ye'll find oot," said Charlie, and set off; and soon Eben slunk after him to the river.

"What is't?" whispered Eben, when they met again.

"Come wi' me," replied his friend, leading the way up Durley Water. About two miles above the village he stopped, and, pointing to a clump of alders, said, "We maun wade," a cunning smile flickering on his face as he spoke.

They waded the stream, and, when they reached the trees, Charlie asked, "Where are we noo?"

"In the middle o' the stream," replied Eben, "on an island, and it's a terrible sma' yin."

"Right ye are," cried his friend proudly, pointing to a hole scooped in the sand near a mass of rock; "and this is my cave, and wha' am I?"

"Charlie Robison, to be sure," gasped Eben, gazing at his companion with wide staring eyes.

"Mair than that, let me tell ye, I'm Charlie Robison Crusoe. This is my island, and ye only need a lick o' black pent and some feathers in the croun o' yer heid to be my man Friday."

"I see naething here but sand and chucky stanes," said Eben sourly.

"Look at this," cried the other, emptying his pockets, which were stuffed with onions and potatoes.

"Eat raw tatties!" whinged Eben, "do ye tak' me for a cannibal?"

In answer Charlie drew out a match and, scratching it on his trouser leg, set fire to a heap of dry furze into which the potatoes and onions were thrown.

"Black Friday wad hae lickit his lips ower meat like this, I can tell ye," he went on, seeing the glum looks of his bookish friend.

"I should like something to kitchen them," objected White Friday.

"Off wi' ye and grip a goat or a parrot. Black Friday wadna have been lang aboot it," sneered the new Crusoe.

"I doot I'm a lang way ahint Friday."

"Very weel, Mr. Saturday, look here," and Charlie, taking off his coat and rolling up his sleeves, began groping under the bank of the river and soon flung out some spreckled trout, and taking these and a flat stone to the fire, they soon had them roasting and shrivelling in a way to make one's mouth water.

The boys after dinner set to work at the cave, and through the warmest hours of a long summer day toiled as they never had before in their lives.

After their day's work they went home tired

and hungry, and looking as if they had been between the stilts of the plough all day, and, refusing to tell where they had been or what they had been doing, went supperless to bed. They knew they had had a good time, and never in all the days to come did they see the sun rise and set on a better.

Though this was the best, it was not the last day spent on Crusoe's island. The boys went there whenever they had a chance, and they were very careful in going and coming to avoid the notice of their elders, as they had no wish to be found out in their ploy and made the butt of every gabbing fool in the village. The different natures of the boys came out in their play. The bookman liked to sit and speak of the wonders of the first Crusoe's island, while the man of action, in carrying out his plans, could have given points to the great Crusoe himself. Ask Ebenezer his reason for suggesting a certain plan, and his ready answer came: "I read it in a book." Show him something cleverly done, and his highest words of praise were: "It's worth putting into a book." Charlie, on the other hand, struck out for himself, and again and again fairly dazzled his learned companion. While

the former was dreaming of making a boat by hollowing out the trunk of a tree, the latter had found some planks and logs by the river-side, and, nailing them firmly together, had built a clumsy raft. Across from the island a dark pool ran sluggishly up into a swamp fringed with birch and alders, where wild ducks and stankies found a quiet resting-place.

With the help of a long pole the boys were able to move the unwieldy raft, which they kept fastened with a rusty chain to a stout willow among the sedge and bulrushes, and they often steered their heavy craft up and down the pool.

The long bright days hastened by, and autumn saw them sitting snugly in a hut built of round stones and turf. In this rude shelter they agreed to spend an entire night before the winter cold set in. Many a talk they had over this contemplated freak, and a busy time they had gathering food, pulling heather, and picking up old sacks and skins for their use on that night of nights. Old Tibbie began to complain of things going amissing. Now a plate disappeared from the kitchen dresser, then a cup left its shelf on the cupboard, next a horn spoon made away with itself, and the cat in its nightly prowl took to

picking up such odd trifles as candle ends and lucifer matches. Various scraps of old tin and delf surprised their owner by disappearing. At length the outfit was complete, and they agreed to slip off after dark instead of going to bed.

The night taken for their camping out was cold and rainy; the broad harvest moon was at its fullest, and flew out of one dark cloud into another. The boys found it easy to slip out unseen, for they had often done it before, and as they wanted to reach the island by boat they crossed the river at the Chain Bridge and took the old Roman road by Nappyround. When they got to the raft a glint of moonshine lighted them across the Dismal Swamp. Soon they had a roaring fire, and the way the white and black puddings, the onions and the potatoes, fizzled and fizzed, burst and hissed, was enough to make a trained hermit forget his strongest vows and fasting, and fall to tooth and nail like the veriest glutton. That night they ate a hearty supper—"fit for a king," Eben said, and I believe all the kings in Europe would have envied at least the keen delight the boys took in eating a meal cooked by themselves by their own fire, sitting in their own house. After a hearty meal they stretched

themselves by the fire, too satisfied with the comfort they enjoyed to mind anything else or even to talk with each other.

Meanwhile the weather took a change for the worse; the wind rose and came with an angry sough through the Cauldcleugh Nick, the raindrops pattered thick and furious on the roof of their little hut, the river raised its voice, and the trees, struck by the wind, rustled and creaked dismally.

"It's weel we have a solid shelter the nicht," whispered Charlie. "We're in the beild o' the rock, neither wind nor water can harm us."

"The first Robison Crusoe," was the reply, "didna get off sae easy in his storm; we've beat him there."

"It's a true word that, Eben," replied the second Crusoe, modestly elated with his better luck; "but bed's the word for baith o' us—a lang lie and a tea breakfast."

Soon they were sleeping the sleep of the healthy animal that has eaten its fill and snugly curls itself up safe and warm. The storm raged louder than ever, and the swollen river had found a new voice as it rushed and roared past their frail shelter. Awakened by the unwonted sound, they

looked out and found the greater part of the island under water. They gazed with dismay on the turbid yellow flood, wide, deep, and swift. The waterdykes had failed to protect the Sornfalla corn that had been standing in stooks higher up, and hundreds of sheaves were boiling and tumbling in the lawless water, jostling with the uprooted trees and broken fences the river had seized in its madness. The boys saw they would be in a perilous plight if the Durley rose much higher, and the clouds were dark and lowering, the wind still swept the mountain-side, raindrops in millions added each their little to the great sea that was steadily rising—eating up the island inch by inch.

"It's a' up wi' us noo, Charlie," whimpered the Speldrin.

"Nae fears; just hover a blink, the water will sune fa'," cried Charlie in an encouraging voice.

"We'll need to wait till we're starved and hungered, and drowned to death," whined Eben.

"Death? Wha's gaun to dee, when there's a boat handy."

"Sic a boat for a roaring flude," said Eben. "We're better as we are."

"I'll mak' the venture, at onyrate," retorted Charlie.

"If ye gang, I'll gang tae," cried Eben desperately.

The raft was easily got at, and soon Charlie had tied the Speldrin to the middle plank, and, seizing a pole to steer with, he jumped on, and, unloosing the chain, the raft floated freely on the yellow waters. In the centre of the stream the current was strong, and they sped merrily on towards Durley.

"It'll be a grand sicht," cried Eben blithely, "for the auld wives to see a ship sailing across Happer Holm. Mony's the yin that'll be wishing he was in oor place."

Onwards hastened the frail craft. The rain was over, and the sun shone brightly on the restless waters when they reached the open strath. The Durley had spread out over the broad meadows, making a lake, and was flowing slower than it did in a confined channel. Here, moving slowly, they came in sight of the village, where they caused a greater stir than they had expected. All the people ran out to look at them, and rushed to the river edge waving their hands and shouting at the top of their voices.

"They're vext they're no beside us," said Eben.

Charlie made no reply; his face wore an anxious look; he guessed what was in the onlookers' minds. They saw the danger in which the raft was, and they sought to warn the boys to steer it out of the main current to avoid dashing against the piers of the bridge, and to land before reaching the rapids lower down, where huge ragged rocks met the full force of the current.

"I rather doot they wad like to see us oot o' this," whispered Ebenezer.

"They maun wait oor time for that," was the reply.

"They're roaring to us to take care o' the brig."

"Let them roar," muttered Charlie, trying hard to guide the raft out of the current, but the river was narrowing and gathering force again. Men and women with pale and clouded faces rushed along the bank; the worn piers of the old bridge frowned in front. The raft rocked helplessly in the yellow swirl and seemed to founder as it struck the bridge, while shrieks of terror rose above the noisy water. Luckily it was put together by Charlie and made of stout timber, so

it sailed out from below the bridge with the crew still on board.

"Hold on, lads! We'll fling you a rope at the Foumart's Scaur," cried Tam Turpie the smith.

The boys now saw their danger, and lay shivering on the frail planks. The rope was flung again and again ere Charlie could grip it. At last it was in his hand and he tied it round his companion's waist, and Eben, more dead than alive, soon lay safely on the bank. Not long after, Charlie lay dripping wet beside his friend, deaf to the ringing cheer that let all the village know that the voyage was ended and no lives lost.

The onlookers had been more frightened than the boys, for they had seen more clearly the peril of the swirling, foaming stream, where, in a roaring sea, the clumsy craft seemed beyond all hope of rescue.

Cold and cowed, they were taken to the smithy to dry.

"What in a' the worl' tempted ye to try sic a caper?" asked Tam Turpie the smith.

"We were playing at Robinson Crusoe," replied Charlie.

"What kind o' geme is that, I wad like to ken?" bawled Tammas.

" It's in a book ; ask Eben."

" Here it is," cried Eben, tugging very hard at a black pulpy mass in his pocket.

" Gie's a haud o't," roared the smith. " I'll keep it frae doin' ony mair mischief." Soon the unlucky book was buried beneath a heap of coal, and seizing the handle of the bellows, Tam went on pumping vigorously till, in a fire that would melt a horse-shoe, the well-worn record of the famous voyager was soon a glowing mass of tinder.

The Speldrin gazed with dismay into the glowing fire. To burn a book was sacrilege in his estimation, but Charlie, seeing his downcast look, sidled up to him and whispered :

" I ken it a' by heart noo."

" If I had a grip o' the rascal that wrote it, I wad serve him in the same way," cried Tam wrathfully ; and perhaps it was as well he hadn't the chance, for he was a fierce, fierce man, the smith.

THE MUCKLE TROOT

CHAPTER VI

THE MUCKLE TROOT

CHARLIE'S parents worked hard for a living on a thankless farm. "Sour Hillocks" it was called, and it was worthy of its name. At the best, it was a bit of half-reclaimed peat moss. It only gave crops on the severest compulsion, and the most favourable return was niggardly in quantity and ill-favoured in quality.

Early and late old Charlie struggled, putting life out to keep life in, and Kate, the guidwife, who was "worth twa o' him ony day," the neighbours said, worked as only a Scots cottar wife can work. Early and late, wet and dry, summer and winter, they slaved and brought up a large family, so large that Kate boasted they never were all under the same roof at the same time, nor indeed could they easily have been had they tried. Long before they were man and woman muckle they hived off to fend for them-

selves, and they all airted townwards. Factory fodder, a cynic might have called them, for various industries claimed them.

They formed part of the bone and muscle that the economic needs of their country call for. Without these fresh, vigorous lives, our closely packed labour warrens would grow less and less till the machinery stood still for lack of workers. There is little fear of that so long as the country can send out its annual crops of Charlie Robisons, and as things are there is little chance of their staying in the place of their birth. There is no work for them. "What does a man get if he stays in his native glen?" Charlie's father used to say. "Devil a thing, but a crooked back and the poorhouse." It was not lack of work that youths like Charlie had to complain of, but the hampered condition of their lives. Their surroundings were most enviable; health-giving breezes swept hill and dale; fur, fin, and feather abounded in plenty; but they only existed as temptations to such as Charlie. The moor and the hill, the loch and the river, were carefully preserved from such as he. Rich men paid fabulous sums for the privilege of licking all the cream off the attractions of country life. The

poacher alone knew the joy of living, and he found every man's hand against him. He was classed with the owl and the kite, and other obnoxious vermin, in the eyes of the landowner and his satellites. Charlie belonged to the class of those who leave the countryside for its good and become units in the mass that helps to make the great cities greater, or, going farther afield, lay the foundations of states yet to be.

His parents looked very leniently on his youthful tendency to lawlessness. It was the playfulness of the colt untrained. Soon he would be broken in, and a life of toil would be his lot. Let him then take his fling. The time was coming quick enough when other things would take up his time. Soon he would leave the parent nest, perhaps never to return. This seemed the natural way—why, then, murmur against it?

We may be sure that all these fine thoughts were far from old Kate's mind as she rushed frantically to the smiddy on hearing of his dangerous exploit. When she heard of his peril she at once feared the worst, and was ready even to give her life if she could rescue her boy.

The way she rushed along boded no good for Charlie, the neighbours said. "My sang! he'll

catch it," said Peggie Baillie. "He'll wish he was in the bottom o' the Skuddy Pool," cried her neighbour. They knew that Charlie and his friend were safe and sound. They did not know that she rushed on fearing the worst. Nor could they stop her. She neither heard nor saw; the danger of her boy filled her heart; and she rushed to the smiddy as if a wild bull was at her heels.

"Where is he? Where's my laddie?" she panted, as she rushed through the doorway. "My Charlie that never gied me a single moment's trouble. He was the—O the vagabond, come oot o' that this very moment an' I'll cloot your chafts for ye."

Charlie was sitting at his ease taking a draw out of Tam Turpie's cutty pipe, looking the very image of contentment. He at once laid aside the pipe and slunk away, his mother following and abusing him heartily; but that troubled him little. Her bark was waur than her bite, and her power of abuse was too often felt to have any special effect. By the time they reached home her wrath was spent. He was soon enjoying a comfortable meal, and he did ample justice to it, as he always did. He promised to behave better in

future, but he had done so often enough before and kept his word till the next time, when he broke out in some new and unexpected manner. "I canna trust ye ony farrer than I can see ye," she would say, and doubtless he gave her reason enough for her estimate of his character.

He liked to enjoy himself in his own way, and he had the art of lending a touch of the marvellous in telling of his adventures. If he wasn't a liar he was next door to one, his listeners said, but not to his face, for nothing angered him like doubting his word, and he could use his fists to convince unwilling hearers. Ebenezer liked his stories and did not trouble himself about their probability. If they were not true they deserved to be, and he shared at times in adventures that looked improbable enough. One marvel he often pondered over, and it was long before the explanation was given him. One Sunday morning Charlie took to the hills and was soon wandering by the side of a pleasant burn that danced gaily down from the hill-top through a beautiful glen till it reached the Durley Water. Looking into a clear pool, that reflected like a looking-glass the waving ferns and gaudy "Bluidy-fingers," he saw that it was alive with

beautiful speckled trout. He forgot all else—the Sabbath day, his kirk-going clothes, and the sound of the kirk bell, which came faintly to the sunken valley. His coat was off and his sleeves buckled up; and soon he was busy flinging the trout to the bank, where they danced joyously as if they were glad to see the sun. Trout after trout lay panting on the grass, then all at once he heard the distant tinkle of the kirk bell, and then the enormity of his conduct dawned upon him. He was breaking the Sabbath. Terrified by the prospect of certain earthly punishment, whatever might be kept in store for him in the vague future beyond, he was about to return his splendid catch to the pool when he saw a way out of the difficulty.

A trickling rill ran away from the pool behind a sandbed loosing itself in the sand, but making a little well which half hid itself beneath a green sod in the bank. He soon had the trouts comfortably placed in what to them was a prison though they did not know it, for they soon revived, regained their liveliness, and, seeing their captor, hid beneath the sod. Here they were safely housed, unless they were bent on another adventure on dry land. Charlie then went

smugly home, and went to the Sunday School as if nothing had happened. Monday turned out a fine day, and getting a hold of Ebenezer he rushed him off to Hurl Burl to guddle troots. Charlie could keep a secret, and so open was he that no one ever suspected he had anything to conceal. They daundered quietly up the burn till they came to the spot where his Sunday catch was concealed. Here he stopped and scratched his head, looking very wise.

"Man, Speldrin," he said, "that looks a fine hidie-hole for troots."

"If they were yince in," replied the Speldrin, "but hoo wad they get in?"

"If the water was big, of course. It's sic a fine hole they micht forget themsel's."

So saying, he flung off his coat, buckled up his sleeves, and soon had his arm far in below the bank. He drew it out and flung a fine trout on to the bank, and while Ebenezer was clutching it to keep it from walloping back to the burn another struck him on the face, then another followed, another and another, till the bank fairly glistened with the finny darlings. At length Charlie got up and helped to string the trout. Ebenezer gazed open-eyed, open-mouthed.

A miracle had happened; nothing was too wonderful after what he had seen with his own eyes.

"I'll never ca' ye a leear again, Charlie," he gasped. "It tak's me a' I can do to believe ma ain leevin' een."

"The thing was quite naitral," replied Charlie, smiling. "Nae doot there was a reason for the troots bein' there if ye only kent it."

But it was some years before he knew the reason, when Charlie told him, as they passed near Hurl Burl.

"The maist wonnerfu' thing I ever saw aboot troots was you getting sae mony fish oot o' a wee well-hole beside the burn," said Ebenezer.

"I didna tell ye then for a guid reason, but I'll tell ye noo," replied Charlie.

And Ebenezer got another proof of the reticence and sagacity of his friend. Charlie knew little about books, but he knew more of the world than his dreaming friend.

One reads of famous impostors who, by some startling trick, compel the belief of their dupes. Charlie had no thoughts of founding a sect or dazzling the world, but if he had, his remarkable catch of trout would have made Ebenezer a willing disciple. All the same it confirmed his

friend's faith in him. He was ready to believe anything after what he had seen. So when Charlie came to him a few days after for another trouting adventure, Ebenezer was prepared for something out of the usual; nor was he disappointed, for his friend began:

"Ye've heard me speak o' the big fish wi' the beard? The yin wi' the gut hingin' oot o' his mooth?"

"Aye, but ye never tell't me where it was."

"Na, na, I was keepin' it for mysel'—I want ye to come an' help me to grip it. We maun keep a calm sough; that pryin' deevil, Tam Tinlin, is keen to try his han'. Tam's aye wantin' to be first. He's aye watchin' you an' me. I'd do a lot to chaw Tam. He's a forretsome creatur'. He likes to work mischief. It's born in him."

"That's true," said Ebenezer. "He likes to play ill-natured tricks against folk. They please him, but they pit everyyin else against him."

"He likes to show hoo clever he is," replied Charlie. "He doesna tak' thocht o' ither folks feelings." So they discussed their unpopular schoolmate as they made their way over the hill to the bearded trout's lair.

It was a glorious day, the hills were taking on their rich colouring from heather bells and green bracken, and the bright sunshine made all life a joy. The pool was in the rocky cutting of a mountain torrent, lying dark and deep, shaded by birch and rowan trees—a spot for a poet or a painter. They crept down the bank to the pool and went on to fix the fork they had brought to the end of a long stick. Soon all was ready for action, when, looking up, there was Tam lying on the bank above and grinning down on them. There was no help for it. He must be invited to join the ploy.

"Hillo, Tam," cried Charlie. "Come and help us!"

He soon clambered down to the side of the pool and asked, "What is it?"

"We're gaun to catch a big troot that's here."

"I wish ye luck," said Tam, "but he's a tricky yin."

They crawled quietly to the side of the pool, peered in, and there was the monster stretched out his entire length on the bottom. The stick was cautiously inserted, and almost touched his scaly back when, stretching himself, he moved slowly away. But he was in no hurry and merely went

farther into the depth of the pool. He seemed to enjoy their efforts to catch him, and was quite indifferent to their clumsy attempt to reach one who had lived and laughed at so many assaults on his life. At length he got tired of their foolery and retired to his den in the dark recesses of a shelving rock. They tried to wile him out again—in vain, and angry at his sulky conduct they began to fling stones into the water. This made matters no better. He retired farther into his safe hiding-place if that were possible. But Tam was resourceful. "There are plenty of big stanes on the brae face. Let's roll them down into the pool till it's filled up and he'll be obleeged to seek a new hidin'-place." The pool was deep and to fill it would be no easy task, but it was a new ploy and they entered into the new task with zest. Soon a big stone was plunged into the pool, making a tremendous splash, then another followed and another. The boys enjoyed their new game and for the moment forgot the old enemy at the bottom of the pool. By and by Tam said he wanted a rest and sat down to watch the splashes; the other two continued at the sport till they were tired, then all started for home, having had a good

day's sport though they had caught nothing. The evening shadows were beginning to lengthen, and the eeriness of the scene touched their minds.

" I feel," said Charlie, " as if I had been doing wrang, the auld troot has leeved comfortable yonder for mony a lang year, and we hae spoiled his hame. Hoo wad ye like if oors was to be hashed in the same way ? "

" That's a fact," said Tam, " and wha kens the truth aboot yon fish. Maybe it's no a'thegether canny."

" I was reading in a book," quo' Ebenezer, " aboot awsome bein's haunting pools, kelpies and even warlocks in the shape o' big fish. Wadn't it be juist awfu' if we've been angering a warlock ? "

" He micht haunt us," said Tam.

" Wheesht, haud yer tongue, dinna speak o' sic like things in this eerie place," said Charlie.

" Nae wonder it's an eerie place," broke in Ebenezer, " the things that have happened aboot here are juist awfu'."

" Tell us some o' them," cried Tam.

" Weel, there's the Caukly Nick yonder be-

tween the Glespin Hill an' the Richie Ferry. They say they've seen folk that's seen folk that saw an awfu' sicht there. It's a nun gaun up and doon the pass cled in white and yae half o' her heid lying on her shouther. It was split richt doon to the chin wi' a sword. They say her father got her shut up in the Nunnery ower by there against her will, and her sweetheart took her oot. They cam' ower the hills and her father cam' on them wi' a lang sherp sword in his han'. He stoppit them, and then there wad be a fecht, for the ither man had a sword tae. Sic a fecht ye never saw. The puir lassie stood glowerin wi' fear, shakin' like an aspian leaf, till in the end the tane o' them lost his sword. I think it was her father, and the ither yin brocht doon his sword wi' sic an awfu' birr—but ah! pity me! she jumped in atween and he sliced her heid in twa. What cam' o' the twa men I never heard, but nae doot they're deid langsyne, but she's aye looking for them."

"I see," cried Tam, "I've forgotten ma stick. I'll gang and get it and tak' the near road hame and meet ye later." This suited all parties, and Tam made off.

Tam ran gaily away, singing or rather trying to sing snatches of rude local rhymes such as :

> Me and my granny an' a great lot mair,
> Kickit up a row gaun to the fair.
> Up comes a policeman, says he, "Wha's there?"
> "It's me an' my granny an' a great lot mair."

"There he gangs," said Charlie, "singing to himsel'. It's a guid thing there's naebody to hear him. He's a tricky yin Tam. I wonner what he's plannin'. He doesna need to get the stick. He could cut a better yin in the plantin'. He's an awfu' leear. In fact, ye canna believe even the opposite o' what he says. A weel, if it comes to leein', there's mair than he can try on that geme."

"I'll back ye there, Charlie," cried Ebenezer.

The boys took plenty of time to get back, and when they did they were met with startling news. Tam Tinlin had caught the big trout. It had been weighed and measured, and broken every record known by the oldest fishers in the village.

"That's the way Tam gaed back singin'. The troot had been stunned or killed and floated down the stream, and Tam had noticed and run back

and got it," muttered Charlie. They were beaten and took their defeat silently. Tam would have his own story, in which they would not figure.

As they went along, they met Tam. As he caught sight of the dejected pair he sang with all his voice:

Sailing ower the boundless sea a thousand leagues from lan'
With half a cabin biscuit an' a big fat man,
A big fat man,
A big fat man,
Half a cabin biscuit an' a big fat man.

"Weel, Tam," cried Charlie as he came along, "did ye say onything aboot us two helpin' ye?"

"No," was the reply. "I wasna gaun to tell a lee. Ye werena near me when I grippit auld Beardy."

"Hoo in a' the worl' did ye manage it?"

"Ye see," replied Tam, "I gaed back for my stick, an' as I lifted it I saw the muckle troot wabblin' in the water below the pool. I ran and struck him wi' ma stick, an' what did he do but grip it; but I held on, and I pu'ed an' he pu'ed. Sic a fecht! I thocht he wad bate me, an' I pu'ed a' ma micht, an' fell back wi' him on the tap o' me. When I cam' to masel', there he was lying as quait as pussy an' as cauld as ice. I managed to carry

him hame. My certy! it'll need a big fryin'-pan to fry him."

"Weel, Tam," said Charlie, "ye've dune us. Maybe I'll hae a day in hairst wi' ye yet. I'se warrant ye'll fin' him geyan teuch—tak' care he disna choke ye."

"I warn ye, Tam," added Ebenezer. "I wadna like to stan' in your shoon in the day of judgment."

Tam put his fingers to his nose and grinned.

"Davert ma skin," gasped Charlie, "c'way, Speldrin"—and they went off sorrowing, while Tam went on his way rejoicing.

THE TWELFTH

CHAPTER VII

THE TWELFTH

The Twelfth of August is a great day in the moorlands of Scotland. Then the country awakens into life after slumbering during the rest of the year. The important thing is the shootings, the important people the sporting tenants. They make themselves pleasant in the countryside, and money circulates freely. Everyone shares in the benefits of that beneficent season. Grouse-shooting has made Scotland a richer and pleasanter place to dwell in. It has made better roads and finer houses in districts previously bare and barren, but it has not altogether been a blessing. It has created a false sense of social values.

A country should be first of all for the people that live in it; and when farmers, and indeed all classes, depend so much on the adventitious rich it tends to bring about an unhealthy state of matters. Besides, to make Scotland a hunting-

ground for the idle rich affects the character of the people. Those who make their living catering for the luxuries of the monied classes are prone to estimate them too highly. Those who cultivate the land are the really important people. If these be rooted out to provide playgrounds for outsiders, pleasant though they may be, or if they are only tolerated on the soil because they are necessary for the sporting tenants, it tends to drive the best of them away to the great industrial centres or even farther afield.

Time was when the conditions of country life were more healthy and natural—possibly they will return. As it is, the shooting parties take too much of the cream of rural life, and the young seek excitement in the towns. There they dream of a different social order, where the old nobility ceases to charm.

The district of Glendurley, situated in the southern uplands, is famous alike for sheep and grouse. The heather-clad hills are neither too high nor too steep for easy climbing; bright sparkling streamlets pour down the hillsides, and gather strength as they draw nearer the main stream.

Among the excellent shootings those on the

Birnie Water took a high place. Glenbirnie and Birniehead took each a side of the Glen, and if the tenants could agree with each other, they had no cause of dispute with anyone else. Indeed, strangers found the Glen a puzzling one to wander in. Roads there were in plenty, but none clearly defined; disused drove roads; bridle-paths, straggling through the heather and only drawing together to breast a steep brae; roads that formerly led to crofts which had been swallowed up in the wild moorland; roads that confused the way and led to nothing. So a stranger seeking a definite place was likely to find himself, in a bewildered way, somewhere else. But the keepers knew, and that was all that was needed.

Mr. Dorrington-Jones, a rich London financier, was the tenant of Glenbirnie Shooting Lodge, and during August he had a large house-party. He had crowds of friends, who came from the ends of the earth, for his clients were to be found wherever vast sums of money were to be gathered together. A jovial crowd they were, of successful men of many nationalities. The weather was fine, the heather in glorious bloom, and the grouse plentiful. Glenbirnie was to them an earthly paradise—pure air, delightful scenery, and birds

abundant. The shooting season was pleasant and profitable for all in the countryside. Money was plentiful, and no one needed to be out of work when the grouse was in full feather, for beaters were needed, and all the trades-people found money coming freely their way. The district benefited by their visit. They were generous to all, and their coming broke up the monotony of the dull country life.

Mrs. Dorrington-Jones was an excellent hostess. Her house-parties were tactfully arranged: good shots were needed to make up the daily bags which were duly reported in the local press; other guests, if they added little to the record, helped greatly to increase the hilarity of the evenings; and even the dullest could enjoy themselves among the quiet hills or with the Glen-folk. Dear Lady Mary was so charmed with the quaint sayings of the peasantry; Master Dorrington-Jones was strongly drawn to Edie Dawson, the local champion caber-tosser; the ill-suppressed language of Geordy the keeper when a shot failed of its mark delighted all but the unfortunate shooter.

Birniehead was let to a friend, and they arranged their daily sport to suit each other, and

occasionally joined forces for a day. At times they arranged to lunch together, either at the Drudel Nypes on the one moor or at the Weaver's Prap on the other. Occasionally a friend, who did not shoot, managed to turn up at lunch. Light carts carried the provisions and brought home the results of the day's sport, and an unwieldy friend would sometimes be driven up the rough road to join the party. Doubtless, all enjoyed these pleasing breaks; certainly the ladies thought they were better than tramping through the heather and bracken or sitting in butts. They were, however, disappointed that Mr. Romano, a genial old bachelor, who had promised to visit Glenbirnie, had written that, owing to press of work, he was unable to come.

The young ladies resolved to play a trick on him, so making friends with the cook, they got a box filled with feathers, beaks, and claws, and sent it to him. In a day or two a large box of chocolate came from him, with a letter, saying that he was so charmed with their gift that he had made up his mind to pay a visit to Glenbirnie as soon as his affairs in London were put in order. He could not fix a date, but would come at the earliest opportunity. As he was no spoil-sport he did

not wish to disturb the shooting arrangements, and if they were out on the moor, he could wait till their return.

Mr. Romano was a great man in Canada, though his name may not have called up visions of wealth in this country. He had been a keen sportsman, but having in one of his expeditions in the far west had a serious accident and lost a leg, he had got a very unpretentious wooden one made for him by a backwoodsman. It was not very handsome, but he found it serviceable—better, indeed, than several more elaborate ones he had tried. In fact, he preferred the wooden leg, and stumped about with it wonderfully. He still liked sport though thus rather handicapped. He could, at least, be driven to the moor, and have a shot from a butt. Everyone was pleased to hear that he was coming, and, knowing he would be sorry to spoil a day's sport, they carried out their usual arrangements.

Mr. Romano was a man who quickly made up his mind, and, sooner than he was expected, he arrived at the village inn. There he was told that he would find an empty house at Glenbirnie Lodge, as a lunch party at the Drudel Nypes had been arranged. However, if he cared, he could

join the party. A spring-van was just setting out with lunch for the shooters on the adjacent moor, and they were sending a two-dozen basket of beer for the Glenbirnie sportsmen. It was to be left at the Lonely Beild ford, where, by a cross-road, another van would pass and take the beer to the Drudel Nypes. It would pass in plenty of time for lunch.

The suggestion pleased Mr. Romano. He enjoyed his drive of about six miles on a rough but interesting road, a sort of bridle-path used at times by the farmers for carting home peats. It firstly went over a low-lying hill, from the top of which he got a fine view of the higher hills in the distance. His drive took him nearer the wild hills, and farther away from all traces of human habitation or culture. This was the charm of the moors for wearied townspeople. It was as desolate as Central Africa; and to have such a place within a few hours' journey of London was a thing worth paying for, and paying very heavily too. It was a clear, sunny day, the heather in full bloom; clumps of birch fringed the streamlets that poured down every hillside. When they came to the greater stream that received the lesser burns, where another

peat-tract intersected the one by which they came, they stopped.

"I was to leave a basket of beer here," said the vanman, "for the cart that goes over to the Drudel Nypes, away between yon hills to the left. It will come in an hour's time, so I'll leave you and you'll soon be with your friends."

Mr. Romano was helped out, and soon he was sitting alone in the solitude. He was glad to rest by himself for a time, and lighting a cigar, he sat enjoying his novel experience. The time passed and there was no sign of the other van. There were so many roads, faintly seen in the heather, that he feared it had gone some other way; and as he waited he became certain that this was the case.

On his way up the Glen the vanman had pointed out to him several roads, growing indistinct from disuse, and said "they had formerly led to houses now swept away."

"Indeed," he said, "I seldom return by the way I went. To-day I go back by the Greenal Stairs, an' the Glenbirnie shooters tak' a near-han' cut ayont the hill yonder."

The adventure thus threatened to be a serious one for him. His friends knew nothing of his

coming, and were not returning by the Lonely Beild. Still worse, there was no certainty that they would know of his plight, for his driver did not belong to the house, but was merely obliging the other party, so he might lie all day and night there without anyone suspecting where he was. To a man with a wooden leg, in a rough country with uncertain roads, where he was most likely to wander farther astray if he attempted to return, and having nothing with him but a couple of dozen of beer, the outlook was rather gloomy.

But Mr. Romano, who had been in critical fixes before, was a man full of resource. He must find a way out. At the worst he might be forced to spend a night on the hill; but this would put his friends about, who were possibly expecting him to dinner in the evening; and if he failed to turn up, his adventure would make him ridiculous. He must find a way out; but how?

He gazed anxiously round about—no sign of any human habitation, and he was evidently out of the beat of the shooters. Clearly he had been left at the wrong place. He scanned the hills. These could not be climbed by him, and every step he took might be taking him farther astray. The rough path by which he came at times could

be traced; then it was lost in the heather, re-appearing in several diverging tracks. They might lead anywhere, and his friends might have heard of his plight, and, coming where he now was, would be unable to tell in what direction he had gone. He could not go very far, amid the rough grass, heather and fern, and the huge boulders scattered in profusion along the hill-sides. Surely there was a way out. He looked at the river. If he followed it far enough down, he would land somewhere less lonely than where he sat; but the river-side was not only rough with stones and heather, but mixed with these was much boggy ground, impossible for him to cross.

As he pondered, his eye fell on the basket of beer. Instinctively his hand went into his pocket and he took out a corkscrew. Then a pleased look came into his face. He was saved; he saw his way—the corkscrew would save him. He lifted a bottle out of the basket, inserted the cork-screw, and drew out the cork. It came out with a hearty plunk, the beer being in fine condition, and an appetising foam came out.

He had a copy of *Punch* in his pocket, and, tearing out a leaf, made a screw, poured the fragrant fluid into it, and, lifting it to his mouth,

drank it. Then, pouring out more, he repeated the dose, and went on till the bottle was empty, when he drew another cork and went through the same ceremony. After that he felt like a new man, and went on to draw another cork; but this time he poured the beer out on the ground. Another and another shared the same fate. When he had emptied a dozen bottles he stopped, and began tearing the *Punch* into pieces. On one of these he took a pencil and wrote: "Lost on the moor by the side of this stream. Lame. Send help at once, Peter Romano." This he attached to the neck of the bottle, and putting back the cork, flung it into the river. Bottle after bottle was treated in the same way, and soon a little fleet of messages was floating down the water.

Mr. Romano watched them bobbing gaily down, till out of sight. Then he sent a few more to keep them company. After that he lighted a cigar and waited, gazing down the stream to see if help was at hand.

A WIRELESS MESSAGE

CHAPTER VIII

A WIRELESS MESSAGE

Charlie Robison was busy by the river-side catching trout in no orthodox way. His coat was off, his sleeves buckled up, his legs bare, and he was searching under the stones and the overhanging banks for trout. A small bag he carried was fairly well filled, and he was about to leave the water and go over the hill to visit the happy company who were busy casting their winter peats.

As he got up and put on his coat he saw an unwonted sight in the river. A small fleet of bottles with paper round their necks came sailing into view. He quickly waded in and drew them to the side and looked at the papers. On reading the message, he at once started up the river; and it was not long till he came in sight of Mr. Romano. He gave a shout, which was answered by Mr. Romano; and soon Charlie was listening to his story.

" There are some folk casting peats ower the hill yonder," said Charlie, " I'll rin and tell them to sen' help ; and you'll be hungry ; I'll bring you something to eat."

" Come back as soon as you can and tell me how I am to get away from here. I must be at Glenbirnie Lodge for dinner."

" You'll get to Glenbirnie a' richt, but I doot you'll need to tak' your denner here wi' me," said Charlie, " it's a lang roun'-aboot road, an' you'll no get there till the darkenin'."

" Well, well, run and get someone to send a conveyance, and come back with food as soon as you can," replied Mr. Romano.

The boy was soon out of sight beyond the nearest hill, and the hungry man waited his return impatiently. It was not very long before the boy came back, bringing with him a plentiful supply of bread, butter, and cheese—part of the food the workers had taken for themselves. Fortunately, there was still a little beer left, so they were soon dining together.

" Maybe ye wad like some kitchen to your bread," said Charlie.

" Yes," was the reply, " but I fear we must do without kitchen luxuries."

"Oh no," said Charlie, "here's routh o' kitchen," and putting his hand into a small bag he had slung over his shoulder, he drew out some fine trout.

"How did you catch them?" asked Mr. Romano.

"I'll sune let you see," answered the boy, and lying down on the bank of the stream, he thrust his bare arm under it and drew out a fine trout in his hand.

"Wonderful! How are they to be cooked?"

"Juist hover a blink an' you'll see," replied Charlie, and gathering some dry heather birns which grew near, he made a fire; then he gutted the trout, and getting a flat stone, soon had them roasting on it. The trout were rather dry eating, but they were both hungry, and "hunger's guid kitchen," as Charlie remarked. After this they were in good spirits. The elderly man even tried his hand at this novel method of fishing, and managed to get a small trout out of the water.

Then they began telling fish stories, at which both excelled. Mr. Romano told of some rivers in Canada where the fish were so plentiful that one could not wade in them without trampling on a salmon. Once he and a friend had fished up

a river in Canada where the fish were so plentiful that they were unable to carry them. They laid them on the bank, and soon at about a yard apart they lay like tiles for several miles.

"I wish you would tell that yin in the shoemaker's shop," said Charlie.

"Why?" asked the other.

"Because they'll no believe some o' my stories, but that bates them."

"Did you ever have as big a catch as that?" asked Mr. Romano.

"I yince catched a thousan'," replied the boy.

"Tell me about it."

"Yae day last simmer I was walkin' by the side o' Durley Water, and at the fit o' a san'bed there was a lang nerrie place that gaed up for a bit between the san'bed an' the bank. A great shoal o' troots cam' soomin' up the water and turned in up this nerrie strip. I waited till they had a' got in, then I stood at the mooth o't, an' there I had the lot, but they were in the water. It wasna deep; there were nae holes for them to hide in; hoo was I to pit my han's on them? The entrance was juist aboot as wide as I am lang, an' if there had been a board handy I could have fixed them in an' gripped them at my leisure.

" I wasna gaun to be bate : I thocht on a plan. Takin' my claes off an' layin' them on the bank, I lay doon in the water, then began to row mysel' cannily up nearer the troots. This weared them farrer an' farrer up till the water was fair hotchin' wi' them. I rowed nearer yet, till I could feel them tich my skin. Anither turn, thinks I, an' they'll need to rin oot o' the water ; so I turned, when, lo and behold ! the hale rick-ma-tick made a bolt ower the tap o' me, an' before I kenned, every yin had got away. If I had ta'en thocht, I micht have been flinging them oot like fillin' a cairt wi' turnips."

" I see you are clever at expedients," said his listener ; " tell me something more about yourself."

Charlie, feeling quite at his ease, told some of his ploys with the Speldrin.

" But do you attend to your lessons ? "

" Na, na, books are a bother," replied the boy frankly.

" How would you like to be in Canada, where you could get plenty of adventures ? "

" That's juist what I wad like ; there's naething doin' for the likes o' me here," said the boy.

" Well," said Mr. Romano, " if you attend to

your lessons for a year or two, I will keep you in mind and may be able to give you a start in Canada."

"There's naething I wad like better," cried the boy eagerly.

"You need not tell anyone this, for I can make no promise till I see what can be done for you."

Thus they sat and talked till deliverance came, in the shape of a light cart used for conveying peats from the moor.

Into this the wooden-legged hero was hoisted; and Charlie went down the stream, collected the bottles, and hid them in a safe place for use in a ploy he and the Speldrin were planning.

He returned home, forming resolutions very different from his wont, and keeping his thoughts about Canada to himself; however, Eben soon noticed that he had suddenly taken a great fancy to his books and often asked help, which was most willingly given.

Mr. Romano was heartily welcomed at the Lodge. His luggage had arrived, and they were perplexed about his non-appearance, though they knew that he always fell on his feet like a cat. "Don't worry," said Mr. Dorrington-Jones, "He's sure to turn up to dinner."

Had someone told him that Mr. Romano had already dined, he would have laughed at the absurdity of the statement.

Sure enough he arrived in a hill-cart, and quite ready to sit down to a second dinner, and do ample justice to it too.

The story of his adventure lost nothing in the telling. Mr. Dorrington-Jones apologised for the awkwardness of the roads to nowhere that criss-crossed his shooting. Lady Mary beamed on the gifted Colonial. A young sportsman complimented him on his moderation with the beer, but grudged that it was wasted, when at the back of the hill he had been gasping with thirst.

Baby Dorrington-Jones, the pert young lady who had suggested sending the box of feathers, said she believed all his story except about his pouring out the beer—it was so unlike him.

Mr. Romano bore their chaff with great good-humour, and over a final cigar with his host said that he had made a find of a promising youth for his ranch in the Rockies. No apologies were needed for his misadventure on the moor—he had spent a glorious day.

THE MUIRBURN

CHAPTER IX

THE MUIRBURN

But all Charlie's adventures were not so lucky. "A wild, steerin' callant, never oot o' mischief," he ever acted on the impulse of the moment, and at times, as wiser men have found, had reason to wish he had held his hand. We act according to character, and often on what seems to be trifling the entire course of our lives is shaped. One memorable day, a Sunday it chanced to be, he set off to the moor. It was about the end of March, and for some weeks the acrid odour of burnt heather had pervaded the air. He had a pipe and a box of matches in his pocket, and he wanted a smoke all by himself, for to smoke in public was what he dared not do. He knew a nice hollow where no one could overlook him, which was finely sheltered from the wind. Here, in peace, he could puff away to his heart's content and no one be the wiser. Soon he was seated by a bright,

sparkling well, and got his pipe out and lighted—and then for the rapture of a smoke! He was only a beginner, and the pleasure was rather of a mixed kind, but he persevered, oblivious of all else. At length the smell of burning aroused him—he had set the heather on fire with the match he had flung carelessly away, and creeping up to the top of the brae the wind had set it into a fierce flame. He rushed to the fire and tried to trample it out, seized a stick he had brought and managed to extinguish a part, but on the other side it was blazing fiercely. How he struggled with the flames! all in vain. At length he saw it was hopeless. It was a very serious matter; the nesting time had come, and soon the moor and hillside would be ablaze and the gamekeepers would be furious. The smoke was rising in a thick black cloud away from the village. He saw a means of escape, so he fled under the cloud of smoke, and did not rest till he had put some miles between himself and the fire. Then he went slowly along and in the distance saw people busy extinguishing the flames. He took plenty of time and re-entered the village from the opposite side of the hill. By that time the fire was put out, and he met Ebenezer, who cried, "Where have you been? You've

missed a grand ploy. Somebody set the heather on fire and we had grand fun putting it out. There's hunders o' acres burned and, man! the gemekeeper is maist awfu' angry. He's gaun to jile the man that did it. I wadna like to be him, that wad I no."

Charlie looked greatly concerned and said he was awfu' vexed that he wasna there, and so he got home unsuspected. Nor was he likely to be found out. But the burning of a hillside during the nesting season was looked on as a very serious matter indeed, not so much from the farmer's point of view as from that of the shooting tenant.

True, several stretches of heather had recently been burned, but under the careful eyes of the gamekeepers, and their fierce language boded ill for the fire-raiser if he were discovered. The shooting tenant would complain to the landowner and might refuse to come on the Twelfth, and his money was urgently needed, for without the rent of the grouse moor the Laird would be left a very poor man indeed.

The Braws of Brawlands were a very old family, and in the national history are recorded their deeds both in black and white. The family had got to the top when society was very differ-

ently formed than it is in our days, and they had contrived to keep there by conforming to the changing needs of the time. But they were better at spending than gathering wealth, and as far as money went they were far behind many modern captains of industry. Bare heather-clad hills and dense shaggy woods gave little return compared with a mill in Manchester or a mine in South Africa. Still, by judicious marriages with the new rich class, the Braws did well; and the mercantile blood so infused into the noble veins brought fresh enterprise into the ancient family. The former relations between the landlord and his tenants were gradually put on a more business basis, and the rent roll greatly increased. This beneficent change was wrought by the introduction of extensive sheep-farming. Small crofts were cleared out, families long rooted to the spot were evicted, and America and our Colonies were enriched with crowds of capable farmers, and the greedy towns got an abundance of factory fodder. This beneficent change came in just when it was urgently needed. Our grand old families were withering away, and soap, ham, cheese, and iron were taking their place. But the sheep restored the balance of power in the social organism, and

the Braws were able to hold their own in high society. Their sons could be educated at the best English schools, their daughters take a high place in the best matrimonial market, and they could spend their money freely in the most approved London fashion.

The change was for the better economically—the countryside grew richer and the farmers became wealthy. It cost a great deal to stock a farm, and men who could afford it found that they could manage large farms of sheep with very few hands. Then the system of led-farms came into being. One could put a shepherd into a farm, and he could conduct it easily, so the farmer grew in wealth. But another change came. The evicted tenants in distant lands began to send wool and mutton cheaper than it could be produced at home, where large rents had to be paid, and it became harder to get suitable tenants. Again luck favoured the Braws. The excess of wealth made at home and abroad had to be spent. Then came the letting of moors for grouse and deer. Here was a source of wealth far exceeding the sheep farms, and now the sheep had to make way for worthier products. Sometimes they were allowed to remain under protest, and, as the farmer paid

much less than the shooting tenant, the interests of the former had to give place to those of the latter. Meanwhile the shepherd had a good time, but he had to remember that the shooting tenant was the true source of wealth and that sheep were possibly keeping down the value of the shooting.

Now, old Jock Jardine had been all his life on the Glengaber farm, and he knew his sheep by head-mark. His soul was in his sheep, and he hated the grouse that had ousted so many from the moorlands. He had grown old in the service, but his heart was stout. Winter and summer he took the hill, and could be heard hounding his dogs on the far hillside. He was slight and wiry, with bent figure, shaggy hair and whiskers—in fact, a hairy covering almost concealed his ruddy cheeks. He had two or three yellow tusks, coloured by the tobacco he was always chewing except when he was smoking. He wore a shepherd tartan plaid and carried a formidable crook. There was always a stocking and a clew of wool in his plaid-neuk, and, with his stick under his arm, he would be knitting as he "looked the hill." He walked quickly, had a sharp eye on his flock, and a ready tongue for his dogs. His voice was loud, and his vocabulary, if limited, was wonderfully expressive.

He liked to boast of his hill, his sheep, and, above all, his dogs. He treated them as creatures as intelligent as himself, and his impatience with their slightest blunder put them into a frenzy. They seldom went wrong; they knew his way and could read the kindliness of his heart beyond his fiercest oaths. But, to know Jock, get him on to his dogs; then he could talk with all his heart. His dogs were better than other people's; and no wonder. They could boast heredity and environment of the best. They could claim to be of the best blood in the countryside—the Ramsay breed. They traced back to Ramsay the sheep-stealer. He had been a cunning and successful rogue, but the credit of his success was largely due to his dog. Its cunning was almost superhuman. Miles away from his farm town, he would point out a few sheep to it, then send it off for them in the darkness, and next morning they would be safely penned in the yard. Their career of theft was long, but in the end both master and servant were caught, conveyed to prison, and dog and man were condemned to be hanged. There was no chance of pardon, for sheep-stealing was the blackest crime in those mountain regions, and called for swift and sure punishment. His friends

knew that, and were resigned. "Men such as Ramsay were plentiful," they said, "but where could one get such another dog." They resolved to save its life, and they did so. On the night before the execution they visited the prison, taking along with them one similar in appearance, and, on leaving, took the condemned dog with them instead of the other they had brought.

Old Jock, as a boy, had been lucky enough to get one of the famous collies. The owners had been unwilling to part with any come of the Ramsay breed, but while playing near the shepherd's house the lad had seen a mangy whelp flung out to die in the steading, had been permitted to take it home, and, by careful nursing night and day, it had recovered. The dog was black with a white ring round the neck, and he loved it as a mother loves her child. "Beauty" repaid his care, and became as clever as any of the Ramsay breed, till grown old in faithful service it passed away, deeply regretted, but not without leaving another in its place. With the changing years a Beauty was always found following at Jock's heel.

The latest Beauty had all the cleverness of his notorious ancestor, and a decided taste for poach-

ing. Sheep-stealing has become a lost art. The general feeling of the community strongly condemns it—only worthless members of society attempt it; and even poaching is looked on with disfavour. The professional poacher is regarded as a lawless blackguard, seeking his living by unfair means, and a disgrace to the countryside. However, poaching on a small scale may sometimes be indulged in either for the love of sport or to give a better flavour to the kail pot. Now Beauty, partly for both reasons, was skilful in capturing forbidden game. Many a hare, rabbit, or moorfowl was brought by night and laid quietly at his master's door; and who could blame the shepherd for making the best of the dog's nocturnal ploys? Jock did not encourage his collie. He rather tried to keep him to his proper duties, for as a thief may begin with petty pilfering and end as an expert burglar, so Beauty might revert to raiding the neighbouring sheep runs. The gamekeeper was quick in suspecting that Beauty was treating himself to forbidden food, and he spoke plainly to the shepherd, saying if he found the dog trespassing he would shoot him; and Jock knew this was no idle threat. However, the more the dog was kept from mischief the more

cunning he grew, till one moonlight night the keeper saw him, and a single shot settled the matter. But it awakened the wrath of the shepherd, and a feud arose between him and the gamekeeper. Jock lacked the cunning of Beauty, and vowed vengeance against all game preservers.

"Whenever I come across a muirfowl's nest," he cried, when pot-valiant in the Wallace's Head tap-room with some cronies, "I'll put my fit on't. The shooters will fin' that they're nane the better o' Beauty's death, puir fella." Possibly echoes of his talk when he had a dram in him reached the keeper, and he kept a watchful eye on him. Unfortunately for Jock, on the day before the fire, he had been at the Fair and got back late with a bottle in his plaid neuk, and failing to reach home, went to sleep in an outhouse at the Faulds.

He lay there next day, and did not get to his own house till after the fire. His absence was remarked, and the keeper at once suspected him, and was furious. Old Jock would have to go, he said, or the lease, nearly up, would not be continued to the farmer.

The farmer was informed, and he swore if Jock had to go he would give up the farm. It was hard for the Laird to lose a good tenant—

harder still to lose a rich shooting tenant; and at that time the factor was treating with a rich man from London who wanted a good grouse moor. To many of our needy Scots Lairds a rich man keen for a grouse moor is a godsend. They have to make every penny a prisoner to get both ends to meet, and, even when they do meet, it is often an uncomfortably tight fit.

Meanwhile Charlie was far from being at his ease. His Sunday smoke had had far-reaching consequences, and he resolved to let the factor know the truth, though little good would come to him. At least, old Jardine, who had always been kind to him, would be cleared.

"I didna ettle to set fire to the heather," he said to himself. "They canna jile me for flingin' away a lowin' spunk. Onyway auld heather is better burned, an' they canna tak' siller oot o' a toom pooch."

Charlie was not one to swither long. He was a man of action, and without further ado, telling no one, he hurried to the factor and told his story.

The factor looked stern, said little, but felt pleased to get out of an awkward predicament, and the boy had shown himself to be made of good metal. He decided to write the shooting

tenant to put in a favourable word for Charlie. Still justice must be done, and adventurous boys must be taught a lesson. They were a danger to the countryside. There was no place for such as he in the economic structure of rural life. Grouse was now the important factor, and must be protected. The barren moors now yielded a richer return than the crofts and old-fashioned modes of livelihood. The big towns were glad to get all they could send, and if they went farther afield all the better for themselves. If Charlie could be induced to leave the Glen it would be better for himself, and much better for all interested in sheep-rearing and game-preserving.

" Well, my lad," he said, " you had better go home. I expect our new shooting tenant to be here in a few days. I'll talk the matter over with him and let you know."

Charlie went home wonderfully relieved. The factor was kindly disposed to him, and would doubtless put in a good word for him with the man from the South.

His parents took a serious view of the matter, and were no ways inclined to think lightly of his offence. If he could get work in one of the towns, where so many of his kind were welcomed

and did well, it would be a good thing for all concerned, and in any case there was little chance of his earning his bread in his native glen.

In a few days the factor sent for him and, after he had been carefully dressed and toshed up, his mother sent him, telling him to make the best o' a bad job, to keep a ceevil tongue in his heid, and promise never to tak' a draw at the pipe amang the heather again, especially in the nestin' season.

"I'll do that," said Charlie, "an' efter this I'll aye chow when I'm amang the heather, juist as my father does whan he's sittin' in the kirk."

When Charlie got to the estate office he was taken to a room and told to wait, and there he sat for a denty bit. Left to himself his thoughts were far from pleasant. Whatever the result of his interview might be, he must be prepared to leave the place he loved, the green glens and the sparkling burns that veined the hillsides. His way in future was veiled in mist; he must struggle through, however pleasant the region beyond might turn out to be.

His future was in other hands than his. Could he not give them all the slip and gang his ain gait? It would be a fine ploy to baffle them, but there were his parents to consider. No, he

must face the worst bravely; so he sat despondent as the minutes ticked round the clock that faced him, his head bowed, and his courage oozing away.

Suddenly he was startled by a hearty voice. "Hillo! my lad, what are you doing here?" Charlie looked up—it was Mr. Romano—the man with the tree leg. The boy's face brightened.

"Man," he cried, "I'm in an awfu' fix, far waur than you were in by the burn-side, for ye kenned the way to get oot."

"Well, one good turn deserves another. Perhaps I'll be able to help you."

"I doot it needs mair than a corkscrew this time."

"I've been told your story, and if you care to trust me, I'm going to my ranch in Canada in a few days, and I'll gladly take you with me. There is plenty of opportunity for a stout lad like you. Now, I like people to make up their minds quickly. Will you go?"

"Blithely, but I maun first get oot o' this."

"There will be no difficulty about that! I'm going to London to-morrow. We must see your father, and if he is willing to trust me with you, we'll go together."

Charlie was not slow in agreeing to his plan, and soon they were driving to "Sour Hillocks."

"I hope your father will agree to let you go," said Mr. Romano.

"Deil a fears," said Charlie blithely. "He's juist fidgin to get me settled to work. Naebody stays in the Glen langer than he can help; a' the laddies, as they grow up, tak' the road."

When they got to the croft, Mr. Romano, who had the gift of setting people at their ease, introduced himself to the boy's father, and suggested that while Charlie got his parritch they might have a quiet talk outside. The two older men seemed at once to be attracted to each other.

Robison was a law-abiding Scot of the old school, with whom life had not gone easily, who had learned ever to set a stoot hert to a stey brae. Dour and self-reliant, he had held his own, fearing no man's frown, seeking no man's favour.

Mr. Romano went straight to the point, proposing to take Charlie with him to Canada and get him employment. He would pay all the expense of his journey there, and if the lad was not satisfied, pay his expenses back. "If he likes his

work, as I expect he will, I'll be glad to get more of his kind; only they do not need to burn a hillside to qualify them for an overseas job."

"I'm terrible muckle obleeged to ye," stammered Robison. "I've been thinkin' for a denty bit hoo to get Charlie a stert in life, an' I little thocht that the hubbleshoo about the Muirburn wad turn oot like this."

"Ah! that puts me in mind to caution you. It would not do if every boy that burned five hundred acres of good grouse nesting-land got a chance such as I shall give him. You understand! don't let other boys in the Glen think he has got easy off."

"I see what ye wad be at. There's ma han' I'll keep a calm sough till I hear frae him."

"We want more men of the right sort in Canada. There is room yonder for every man, woman, and child in Scotland. They would be better there, and Canada would be all the better."

"But Scotland wad be a desert," objected Robison.

"No," was the reply, "it would be the playing ground of the Empire, richer, better in every way than it is."

"I hae ma doots aboot that," sighed the old man, "but what maun be maun be."

"There are districts in Canada more Scottish than Scotland. The Scot abroad is more patriotic than the Scot at home."

"Aiblins."

Charlie went away in full feather, and soon wrote home in glowing terms. Soon a brother joined him, then another and another, till the parents also crossed the sea.

Canada was all the richer—but Scotland!——

Charlie left the Glen and prospered. He was not the only one of whom this could be said, though they did not make a start by setting the heather on fire. His schoolfellow, Tam Tinlin, is the brightest example of this. He attained fortune in a more common way—a much more common way.

I am not writing Mr. Thomas Tinlin's life. I leave that to a better hand. It would make a fine supplementary chapter to *Self-Help*. Tam was a man by himself. He always considered his own interests first, and, whatever ploy he was in, managed, like the cat, to fall on his feet. Charlie and Eben tried at times to get the better of him,

but somehow the advantage was sure to fall to Tam. A square-built, sturdy loon was laughin' Tam, never afraid to try his luck and invariably making the best of it.

In the progress of the race from savagery to civilisation, the most important factor is the gift of getting other people to work for one. This puts brains at the top and gives the leisure from which all the arts spring. Tam knew this by instinct and practised it at school and in after life. He started to make his way in the world as cow-herd, and later as wee man (or orra man) at Raggangill, a farm at easy walking distance from Durley. Here he had in his first summer's herding a glorious time. He was full of expedients for gripping trout and girning rabbits, and he invited favourites after school hours to help him, and for little pay, in the shape of his ample piece of bread and cheese in the corner of his plaid, he got his work easily done. One would turn a cow from forbidden pastures, another cut thistles or help to mend a slap in the dyke. In hay-time a willing band of workers came, who enjoyed their work. Curds and cream and other dainties rewarded their toil, and everyone did his best. Tam meanwhile, sitting on the dyke, kept his

helpers busy and would cry : " Keep at it, lads ; one heid plannin' is worth ten pair o' hands. Look nebby. If ye dinna stick in, I'll no let ye come back. Mony a yin wad be gled o' the chance ye're gettin'."

Tam's master knew his worth, and, when in due time he was promoted as orra man, he showed more and more his capacity for handling men and getting the best out of them.

By and by a friend of his master came from Australia on a visit, saw and appreciated Tam's gifts, and took him to Australia. How he prospered abler pens than mine can tell. His portrait by Kangermac is allowed to be among the best examples of Australian art. Years after a Durley friend called on him and was treated in a princely fashion. On Sunday, when the friend proposed to go to church, Tam said : " I'm such a great man here that I seldom go to church. It puts the minister about ; he gets quite nervous." He asked about Glendurley, and, among other things, was told that the landlords were having hard times.

" Do you think the Glen will come into the market ? " he asked. " If so, let me know ; I might buy it."

" An estate in these days is a luxury," replied

his friend. "Few men are rich enough to afford it."

Tam thought over this, and was not long in replying: "If a' the folk were cleared oot, an' the hooses knocked doon, it wad mak' the best 'shooting' in Scotland."

A STUDENT'S FLITTING

CHAPTER X

A STUDENT'S FLITTING

EBENEZER'S Aunt Tibbie had some business to transact in Edinburgh, and, after much deliberation and preparation, she left her croft in charge of an obliging neighbour and went away for a fortnight, taking Ebenezer with her.

An old acquaintance of hers, Mrs. Forsyth, who lived in Edinburgh, where her husband was employed as a joiner, had often asked her to stay a few days with her in town, in return for several visits made to the Knap. Again and again Tibbie had agreed to do so, but the cares of the croft were engrossing, and not easily left in the hands of an outsider; but now her business in town was pressing, and an old friend, on whom she could depend, had arranged to live at the Knap and attend to the live stock. After giving her deputy careful instructions, Tibbie and the boy set out for the city, and, on arriving there,

were welcomed by the Forsyths, and treated with great kindness.

The wind-swept city, with its steep streets, high houses, and dark closes, fascinated the boy by night and by day. He liked to watch the people hurrying past in the busy streets, and, better still, to wander in the old town and gaze on houses whose former inhabitants had shared in the making of Scottish history.

He saw many curious, old-fashioned houses, now swept away. One day, peering into a dark alley that led down from the High Street, he read the name above the archway—Murdoch's Close, where lately, in the local paper, the chief scene of a thrilling tale had been laid in a dark house. He had listened week by week as it was read in the shoemaker's shop, by Robbie Lindsay, for the benefit of the company. Ebenezer was daring enough to enter the close, and clamber the very stair, and only ran away in terror as he heard advancing footsteps.

One afternoon, as he was sauntering in a quiet, dingy street, he heard in the distance shouting and laughter. As he gazed in the direction of the sound, a noise faintly resembling music came out of some instrument, and several

loud discordant voices seemed trying to accompany it. While he stood staring, a procession of young men, seemingly sober and dressed in their Sunday clothes, came along. They were men, yet behaving like schoolboys.

First came a dark, pock-marked youth, with his coat turned outside in, playing on a concertina. Next, followed a burly fellow, in a huge rough ulster, brandishing a thick yellow stick, singing at the top of his voice :

> Here's to good old whisky,
> Drink it down, drink it down.

Walking beside him was a pale, lanky youth, smoking a big wooden pipe, and carrying a tortoise in one hand and a curious brass instrument in the other. Then came some others carrying bundles of books ; one of these had also a stuffed monkey, and following them came a boy carrying several tumblers, and a handkerchief full of oranges. Finally came one carrying a large tin bath, which he kept vigorously thumping with a poker.

They straggled along in the middle of the street, followed by a number of yelling urchins ; and a yelping terrier, with docked ears and tail, ran about in a state of great excitement.

"Guidsake," said an old wife, who was standing near Ebenezer, "it's a waesome sicht to see grown men carryin' on like that—an' they're weel put-on tae."

The people in the street, however, paid little attention, passing by as if such a sight was nothing out of the usual.

A little behind came a stout woman and a young man with three hats on his head, carrying a black box between them. As Ebenezer stood near, with open mouth and staring eyes, the youth asked him to take an end of the box for a little, and, when the boy complied, drew a tin whistle from his breast pocket, and rushed after his companions, yelling, jumping, and striking out at all and sundry with the whistle. The queer company went on, and turned down a side street, at the corner of which the box was set down on the edge of the pavement.

"Keep your e'e on it for a minute, laddie," said the woman, and off she set as if running for the doctor.

Ebenezer sat patiently on the box—he never saw her again. The young men were out of sight, and nobody seemed to care further about the box.

"What are you sittin' there for, laddie?" asked an inquisitive old woman, who had stopped in passing and was eyeing him curiously.

"I dinna ken," he whimpered.

"Guid guide us," she ejaculated, "the creatur's an innocent, but it's no a bad box onyway."

As he sat still, a number of idlers gathered round, who were dispersed by a policeman using the well-known formula, "Move on," then, turning to the boy, he asked, where he was taking the box to.

"I dinna ken," blubbered Ebenezer woefully.

"If ye dinna ken, wha does?" asked the man in authority.

"Your question is a perfectly natural one under the circumstances," responded Ebenezer in his habitual slow and careful mode of speech.

"Ye're an auld-farrant yin, I'm thinkin'," said the policeman, as he moved on.

Ebenezer sat patiently, till, growing hungry and frightened by his loneliness and the increasing darkness, he got off the box, and dragged it into an entry near by. As he set it down the lid came off, and revealed, to his horror, a human

skeleton. He at once took to his heels, resolving to keep clear of that street in future, and did not feel safe till he arrived at Mr. Forsyth's.

The wonder of this last incident filled his mind, and he expected next day to see in all the papers a lurid account of a box containing a human skeleton, and a boy—not yet traced—who had been seen sitting on it. It was hoped that the perpetrators of the dastardly outrage would soon be in the hands of justice.

To the boy's surprise, perhaps almost to his disappointment, no such paragraph appeared, nor was any notice taken whatever of the mysterious affair.

Ebenezer returned to Glendurley, his head packed with wonders, and feeling that he must either speak or burst. In great secrecy he whispered the tale of the skeleton in the box, first to one then to another of his cronies, till it became the talk of the parish. He stalked about in conscious pride—the boy murderer or the skeleton in the box. Few believed him; but what a picturesque gift of lying the little beggar possessed!

Often he was taken aside, and, in an awed whisper, asked to tell about the dead-man's box;

and the story, as such stories will, grew better daily in the telling. News of it even reached the Big Hoose, where young Mr. Findlay, the Collegener, lived with his mother.

Great was the wonder of Tibbie when one day word came to send the boy along, as Mr. Findlay wanted to speak to him. The old body was in a great fluster, and she spent a busy forenoon, washing, combing, brushing, and lecturing him on company manners. At last, though still far from perfect, when all her arts of cleansing and decoration were exhausted, he escaped from her hands, and set off, eager to see the learned man, who came home regularly every spring with a cart-load of prizes—who knew the languages, and could speak as easily to a hurdy-gurdy man as to you or me.

Ebenezer hurried, till he reached the Big Hoose door, then he began to think nervously of what lay before him: to enter a braw hoose, and speak face to face with a man of great learning. He ran his fingers hurriedly through his hair, rubbed imaginary specks of mud from his clothes, took a long breath, set his teeth firm—and knocked gently. No one came, and he ventured a second timid tap; and as he lingered,

meditating flight or another assault on the unyielding door, Mr. Findlay strolled quietly up to him from the shrubbery, and, with a genial smile, asked if he could help him in any way.

"I'm Ebenezer Bryden, if ye please, sir," he stammered.

"I'm delighted to see you," was the reply, "will you come in?"

"If ye please, sir," the boy hesitated, "I'm the laddie that carried the dead-man's box."

"Come in and tell me all about it," said the student kindly, and he led the way to the library.

Ebenezer's eyes glistened with delight as he gazed round—books, books, everywhere books; on the walls, on the table, on the chairs; even the floor was honoured with heaps of volumes. Pictures, busts, and a litter of artistic trifles helped to brighten the room, which was richly and comfortably furnished.

The man himself attracted Ebenezer more than all the rest. There was a charm about his appearance which impressed people favourably when first seen; and this charm his unique personality never lost. Easy, negligent, indifferent, he might appear to be, but the soul never slept in the bright deep-seeing eyes; and the smile

that played round the sensitive mouth revealed a perennial sympathy with all sorts and conditions of life. He ever looked the scholar, the artist, the tender and true-hearted man.

The boy was at once at his ease, and told his adventure as if he were with a schoolfellow.

"A strange story," remarked Mr. Findlay, who had listened attentively, "how do you explain it?"

"Maybe a wheen circus folk broken loose," suggested Ebenezer. "I canna unnerstan' hoo the folk in Edinburgh can pit up wi' sic on-gauns."

Before the student could reply, the door opened, and Ebenezer, changing colour, gasped, "Tak' care—that's him."

A surprising figure was standing in the doorway; a tall, shambling youth, with long, dark hair and keen, piercing eyes. His neck was bare, his shirt unbuttoned; a velvet jacket gave a touch of romance to his lank, slouching appearance; and in his hand he carried a curiously carved Indian club.

"I've been hearing an awful tale about a skeleton in a box," said Mr. Findlay, "and I feel rather nervous, so please keep your distance.

Is this the man you suspect?" he continued, turning to Ebenezer.

"It's terrible like him," whispered the boy, making for the far end of the room.

"Stay," thundered the intruder, "where's the box I left you in charge of?"

"In the police office—if ye daur venture there," replied Ebenezer boldly.

"I'm glad to hear it; I was afraid you had stolen it."

"Deil a fears o' me rinnin' away wi' a wheen deid man's banes."

"Very well," said the intruder, "take a cigar."

"I dinna want yin," replied the boy.

"Ah! prefer a pipe? Quite right; a pipe's the staple."

"I smoke naething but paper," replied Ebenezer solemnly.

"Help yourself; tear a leaf out of one of these books—anyone—they are all alike useless."

"Tear a leaf oot o' a book!" ejaculated Ebenezer, aghast at the proposal. "Man, ye're no wyse."

At these words, both his listeners burst into laughter.

"Keep your eye on him, till I get you some apples," said Mr. Findlay, as he left the room.

Ebenezer, eyeing the intruder askance, drew himself behind the table.

When they were alone, however, the dangerous man changed countenance, and turning to the boy, said, "What books are you reading at school?" and soon they were on the easiest terms with each other.

"Have you told the boy," said Mr. Findlay, as he re-entered the library, "how you came to be parading the streets with a skeleton?"

"I was helping at a medical student's flitting," was the unabashed reply. "You must understand, young fellow, my lad, that students come to the University from the ends of the earth —many, especially, from England. When the session breaks up, they go home, and, to save the expense of keeping up lodgings during the vacation, they pawn their books, instruments, and skeleton. The students help each other to pawn their belongings, and then they have a jolly supper with the money got from storing the luggage."

Ebenezer listened eagerly to this curious explanation, his face brightened, and he exclaimed,

as the other finished, "The College! that's the place for me; I wish I was at the College."

The two friends laughed immoderately at this, and Mr. Findlay said, "Stranger things have happened; keep close to your books and——"

"Here," his eccentric friend broke in, "is a book to begin with," and going to the table he lifted a handsome volume, and held it out to the boy, who looked inquiringly at Mr. Findlay. Mr. Findlay nodded, and, taking up another book, said, "Take this one also to keep it company."

The boy, keen to look over the volumes, soon took his departure, his mind whirling with the excitement of his wonderful visit. As he hurried home, Mr. Lindsay met him and the boy told him about his interview with the students, saying, as he ended, "I wad like to gang to the College."

"Anybody can go to the University if he wants. It is the glory of our Parochial School system that a boy can go straight from the Parish School, and many of our best scholars have done so. I've known lads who went to Edinburgh, got work of some kind, took evening classes, saved a little money, worked during the summer vacations, and stood their own with boys from

the High Schools, and took a worthy place in the professions."

Ebenezer went home, kept his own counsel, and in time got work in Edinburgh.

Some years after, in Laird Belstane's, when there was a talk about weel-doin' Durley boys, a man, who had recently been in Edinburgh, said, "As I was going down the High Street lately, I met young Bryden with a bundle of books under his arm. When I asked what he was doing, he said, 'I'm at the College.'"

But I am not writing "The Speldrin's Progress," so I will leave him, a gleaner in the spacious fields of knowledge under Solomon's Shadow.

ROBBIE LINDSAY

CHAPTER XI

ROBBIE LINDSAY

PEOPLE used to wonder what brought old Robert Lindsay from the stir and bustle of city life to the quiet village among the grey hills of Glendurley. His spare form, clad in rusty black, his bent shoulders, thin nervous hands, and white thoughtful face were in strong contrast with the burly figures, sunburnt faces, and brown hands of the hardy rustics among whom he lived. He came to Durley an old worn-out man, lived by himself in a small thatched cottage, and got employment with the shoemaker, as he was a member of the craft, though far from being a first-class hand. "He was a thowless creatur'," his employer said, "but terrible willin'." As he began, so he continued, a lonely old man, working contentedly for the small wage that served his daily needs.

He took no part in the breezy pastimes of his neighbours. The bowling-green and quoiting-

ground attracted him not in summer. Nor could the Inn parlour or curling-pond wile him from his work or quiet fireside in winter. "Robbie is a man by himsel'," people said; yet he was both pleasant and entertaining, and his company was much sought after by young and old, in the summer evenings at the Brig' En' or in winter by the fireside. He was an authority on all knotty points of book learning, and was always ready, always willing, to give patient listeners treasures new and old which he had gleaned in his reading.

The old man had been from his boyhood an insatiable reader, a keen collector of all printed matter. In a word, he was what has been styled a bookworm.

Those who love to browse in goodly libraries, rich in the wisdom and massive learning of our fathers, know that books, no matter how excellent their contents, may, if seldom opened, become the victims of a mischievous insect, which tunnels through and through the leaves, called a book-worm. Authorities differ about the nature of this book pest, but, whatever it may be, surely it does not supply a very appropriate name to such men as Robert Lindsay, who handle books tenderly because they love them, and are the collectors and

preservers of such volumes as in the end are judged worthy of an honourable place on the shelves of the great national libraries. Possibly they are called bookworms because they like to dwell among books, and to feast their minds on the best thoughts of the wisest men. The old man's hobby was to possess as many books as possible, to devote nearly all his spare time to reading, and to tell freely what he had gathered from the companions of his solitude.

He was a book reader, not a book writer. Old Robert valued literature too highly, thought too humbly of himself, to venture amongst the goodly company who are ever ready to teach and delight, yet never intrude where they are not wanted. They dwelt in a world apart: he was privileged to commune with them in their books; that to him was enough. Yet he was not destitute of literary capacity; he could tell a story well, and liked to tell it, and his listeners, especially if they were young, crowded round him eagerly crying for more. If he came near the school during the play-hour he was at once mobbed, captured, commanded to stand and deliver a story there and then, and I have seen him at times struggling with a mass of rough boys, who clustered round him as

bees gather round their queen, imploring them to keep off and sit down quietly and he would tell them a story. The promise once made, a silence such as the schoolmaster himself was never able to obtain, reigned, then he would go on to tell some fairy legend or some memory of the old days when the battles for freedom were waged. He could interest the young in the cairns grey with lichen on the bleak wind-swept hills of Glendurley, and helped them to see in the mouldering walls and dusty chambers of the old castles proud dwellings, where brave men and fair women once lived and loved. During the evening, in the shoemaker's shop, which was used as a sort of informal club by the villagers, he sat busy at his craft sharing in the talk. Then he was at his best and told his queerest stories.

If a stranger chanced to see him at work and listened to his varied talk, he was likely to ask how such a man came to be there. In a city, where all kinds of men are found, he might be looked for, though not easily found; among these pastoral solitudes he was as a white man in Central Africa or a shepherd in St. James's Park. Here were no bookshops into the windows of which he could gaze; no bookstalls crowded

with faded volumes of worn-out divinity; no tracts on questions which no longer stir men's passions; no poetry dead as the author's dusty heart; no grimy fourpenny box into which he could dive and, with trembling delight, rescue treasures from oblivion.

Why did he banish himself to a place where books were not bought and sold, where the *Scots Worthies* or Boston's *Fourfold State* gave sufficient entertainment for the sober-minded, where the weekly newspaper was enough to record the state of the world, while for those of weaker capacity *John Cheap the Chapman's Library* satisfied their tastes? He came among the peaceful hills as a sailor is at times, through stress of weather, forced to shelter on a barren coast. His love of books and quiet reading was doubtless the motive that turned him from the busy streets, in which the greater part of his life had been passed, to the bare, grey hills of Glendurley.

Born in Glasgow, where he had learned his trade, his life for many years had been placid and fairly prosperous. Being industrious and intelligent, in time he set up for himself, married, and did fairly well; but neither wife nor shop could keep him from his favourite books, so year

by year his bookshelves grew heavier and his mind more stored with varied information. Whether his business suffered by his love of books I know not, but in all probability it did, for he never was a rich man, although always in comfortable circumstances.

Thus the world went with him till his sixtieth year; then in a single night all was changed. A fire which broke out in a neighbouring house spread to his, and he awoke to find his house in flames. His wife and he were rescued with difficulty. No sooner were they in safety than he became frantic about his books. Again and again he rushed through the smoke and reappeared with an armful of volumes. Many were rescued by the firemen, partly burned, while some were damaged by water. The greater part was locked up in bookcases and could not be reached. His shop and nearly all that it held shared the same fate, and thus in a single night did the results of his patient care vanish in smoke and dust. When the morning came he was a ruined man. His wife never recovered from the shock, and soon she too passed away. He had no heart to resume business, so, gathering together the half-burned fragments of his library, he soon after

took a cottage in Durley, where he found employment.

He never again was the man he had been; his mind dwelt on the past, and it was whispered that he was addicted to opium. I fear this was true, for he had the flickering uncertainty of purpose, the helplessness in practical affairs, which marks its victims. This may have helped his gift of story-telling. Certainly many of his tales are still fresh in my mind, while those of abler men have left no trace.

His passion for reading and collecting books never left him, but he learned to rely less on them in the pursuit of knowledge. Missing his favourite bookstalls, he began to collect butterflies, eggs, and fossils; and delighted in rummaging among the well-worn volumes of his neighbours. At rare intervals, when a household was broken up, and the books were sold, he was a keen bidder, though there were few to oppose him.

As he grew weaker with the passing years he became more unfit for his work, and at last resolved to go back to the city; but he could not take his books with him and they got house-room from a kindly neighbour. He got some boys to help him to flit the books; they borrowed the

Laird's barrow for the purpose, and one did not know whether to laugh or cry as the heavy boxes were taken away. Then on a cold misty night he left, his young friends seeing him to the station. We never saw him again, nor did he send for his books. Many of them still retain an honoured place on the shelves of his old friend. It was rumoured that he took ill on his arrival in town, and was sent to the poorhouse, where he soon died. Surely he deserved a better fate!

Whatever his end may have been, his memory will long be held dear in the Glen. Some who now hold honoured positions remember with gratitude that their early aspirations were kindled and guided by the teaching of this broken old man.

THE LAIRD'S HARANGUE

CHAPTER XII

THE LAIRD'S HARANGUE

DURLEY without Laird Glendinning would be like a Burns collection without a Kilmarnock edition. He owned a small farm at the village Tounheid, extending from the sky-line to the water edge—from the Belstane Rock to the Belstane Pool. He was known as the Auld Laird, or Belstane. Though not rich, he had enough to serve his turn; his well-plenished farmsteading was always in the best of order inside and out. At nights he sat in the cosy kitchen by the ingle-neuk, wearing a broad blue bonnet, as was the old Scots custom, which was only doffed at family worship and meal times. The guidwife kept a roaring peat fire, and neighbours young and old gathered round it in the foresupper. At times they played at catch-the-ten, or watched two skilled players at the dambrod. But the Laird liked a crack best, and when he started on

a hobby it was often a very one-sided crack, and not easy for anyone else to get in a word edgeways—a "harangue" his wife called it. His discursive rambling talk was like a water-tap; once put on, it poured steadily out, and like the tap could be turned off, not because the supply was exhausted, but because the listeners stretched themselves and took the road. His house was a free club—all were welcome.

"Come in, if your feet's clean," he would cry to a neighbour looking in at the door; "sit ye doon, an' gie's your crack."

The boys who had returned from the town on holiday never passed his door, and ever got a hearty welcome; and the varied fortunes of the absent were discussed with great frankness. The gradual thinning out of the Glen folk was a sore subject with the Laird.

"Ay, man," he would say, as the good fortune of some well-doing absent laddie was discussed, "do ye tell me sae? My faigs! he's dune weel; but he's like the lave. The place is juist like a nursery noo. Nae suner are they up an' gotten lair, but they're off like stour." Then, as the listeners drew their chairs closer, he would start a harangue.

"The laddies here are weel brocht up—caller air, halesome parritch—an' weel versed in baith the Bible an' the carritch. We're weel behaved at baith kirk an' market. There's nae vice amang's. Nae doot some may drink an' sweir, an' tell lees, an' misca' their neibors, an' be geyan lood comin' frae the Fair; but there's nae vice amang's. We're a' rale dacent, weel-behaved folk. That's the way oor young folk are sae respekit when they gang amang the fremit.

"Noo, there's Bauldy Fud, as we ca'd him, gaed aff to be a coonter-louper—an' faigs! he loupit weel—a pushin' laddie Bauldy. He sterted soopin' oot his maister's shop; an' in the en', soopit away the dochter; an' noo he's ridin' in his carriage. Wife! there's a big row o' tobacco, that he sent me, ablow the dresser; row it oot, an' cut aff a guid whang for Jamie here. Ay, ay, he was a fell yin Bauldy.

"I thocht mair o' Peter Todd, noo—a blate callant, but rale biddable. He's no ridin' in his carriage yet; but as broken a ship has come to land.

"Wull Tait ran away wi' the sodgers—lucky for him there was naething doin' in the way o' fechtin' when he jined the redcoats. He cam'

back wi' a pension. I whiles think he had better steyed away.

" Very different frae Wull was Andrew Reid ; though he didna belang to oor pairts. He cam' frae somewhere doon-throo, but he cam' young—a puir orfant laddie—and he got a hame amang's, claes to his back, an' meat to his wame—an' he was sair in need o' baith, I can tell ye. Weel, somehoo, a'body likit him, an' he grew up juist yin o' oorsel's. In the en', when man muckle, he left the Glen like the lave, an' for years little was heard o' him, except that he had a gran' place wi' yin that had plenty, an' he rose to be heid gar'ner. At lang an' last he dee'd, an' what think ye ! He left the maist feck o' his siller to help the puir in the parish, ' for,' he said, ' I was a stranger an' ye took me in.' I can tell ye, it made us rale prood o' oorsel's.

" I can pit up wi' the maist feck o' folk—it tak's a' kin' to mak' a worl'. Yince, I maun alloo, my feelin's got the better o' me an' I raither fell through my mainners.

" Twa English loons—that cam' for the shuitin'—lookit in yae nicht an' sterted wi' their impidence. The way they gaed on aboot Scots folk was angersome to hear. ' Wallace,' they

said, ' was a Welshman, Robert Bruce a murderer, John Knox an' Queen Mary nae better than they should be.' I keepit my temper; I juist tholed an' sat still. But when they said Burns never wrote a line o' his poems; that they were a' written by a wheen drunken fallies in Kilmarnock wha egged on an ignorant plooman chiel to pit his name to them—yin Burness, wha couldna even spell his ain name—then my feelin's fairly got the better o' me; I juist grippit the twasome by the neck an' marched them to the door. I'll no say I wrocht a miracle; but I cast oot twa deevils onyway.

" That brings to my min' a ploy I had aboot muirfool. The main thing noo-a-days is the shuitin'. The Twelfth o' August is mair thocht on than St. Andrew's Day; for the grouse-shuitin' sterts an' the gentry come frae a' pairts —an' a cheery set o' fallies they are. Nae doot they work hard in their ain way a' the rest o' the year; an' they're weel entitled to a roarin' time on the muirs. They've plenty o' siller an' they're no feart to spen't; an' they bring a routh o't into the country.

" Noo, geme are no like sheep; they change their maister whenever they cross the mairch

dyke, an' whenever a man has a bit grun' o' his ain he has a' the wild beasts he can kill on it.

"Time was when we thocht nocht o' that. I wadna gie a guid fat earock for a' the grouse that ever was cleckit; but it's the fashion noo to cry them up; an' the price thae Southron billies will gie for a week or twa's shuitin' is clean ridiculous. Tastes differ; 'Some like puddocks an' some like parritch,' as the laddie said to the Frenchman. Ye ken my grun' lies atween twa big shuitin's, an' though the birds may nest on their side, when they flee ower the mairch dyke they are mine. Ye see, I've a' the richts o' my ain lan', an' aiblins at antrin times I wad shuit a bird or a beast.

"Weel, the Duke's factor wanted me to sell the shuitin' richts for ten pounds. Gin I had, wha wad hae been the fule but me? Sae I tellt him I wad do naething o' the kin'. Then he shut up a richt-o'-way that had been in use by me an' my forebears for gudeness kens hoo lang. He put a flake across the road. I juist took a saw an' cut it through the middle, an' flang yae half to yae side o' the road an' the tither to the ither. He put up anither flake an' threatened me wi' the law. Sae I gaed to Johnny Fisher, a

weel-daein' Durley laddie, wha had set up as a lawyer in Edinburgh. He lookit through my titles, an' said I was in the richt; but advised me to ca' canny. 'It's no easy to tak' law o' a Duke, for it wad cost ye mair than it's worth,' he said; 'but keep the geme richts in your ain han' an' every bird or beast ye kill is your ain. Gang oot wi' your gun on the Twelfth, an' though ye kill nane, a miss is as guid as a mile—ye'll gie your grippy neibor a fricht; but keep a calm sough; bide on your ain side o' the mairch dyke, an' the Duke can whussel on his thoom for a' ye care.'

"Weel, I gaed hame, an' thocht the maitter oot, an' Dod, man! I fell on a plan an' made up my min' in the crack o' a whip. Near the tap o' the hill, I had twa or three acres o' geyan level lan'—nae great soil, but it ser'd my turn. I fenced an' ploo'd it, an' sawed it wi' corn. The neibors laughed, but I never let on that I heard them. 'The corn will never ripen,' they said.

"'Aiblins, if left alane, it'll ser' my turn,' says I.

"The corn grew up, short an' green, but it seeded. Then I put up a rickle or twa o' stanes an' divots—butts, the gentry ca' them. When the

Twelfth cam' I pickit oot yin or twa neibors that could han'le a gun. Sune the birds, frichted by the firin' on baith sides o' my grun', flew ower, an' crack gaed oor guns—first yin, then anither.

" Next day we sent a cartfu' o' muirfool to the market toon an' got a guid price.

" Sic a hullabaloo got up, ye never kenned the like. The factor cam' yince-erran' an' said the Duke was very much annoyed wi' me.

" ' I respect the Duke as much as you dae,' says I ; ' but I ken my richts, an' I'll no be taen the better o' by gentle or semple.'

" The *Hurl Burl Budget* printed a lang narration, ca'in' me a poacher. I wrote at yince to the editor, an' said if he didna tak' back his words I wad pit the maitter into my lawyer's han's. Man ! the chiel got a fricht, an' said he was sorry —he had been under a terrible misapprehension— sae I juist held to my yokin'. They fand they had taen the wrang soo by the lug.

" At lang an' last, the gentry laid their heids thegither an' had a ceevil crack wi' me anent the ploy. ' Gie's back my richt-o'-way,' says I, ' an' a rent for my shuitin'.'

" They gied in, an' offered far mair than I

wad hae asked. Naebody tries to get the better o' me noo—for they ken richt weel they canna. There's naething like stanin' up for your richts—the simple man's the beggar's brither.

" I've whiles been asked to sell my lan' ; but na, na, I ken better. The maist o' the sma' lairdships here hae changed han's—no for the guid o' the Glen. The big lairds spen' the maist feck o' their time an' their siller in London—they're seen here neither at kirk nor market. They try to be English ; but the English juist laugh at them. They micht as weel try to turn a thrussel into a rose.

" Folk that are ashamed o' their country are better away frae it ; but oor laddies that leave the country keep aye a warm hert for the Glen. Muirlan'-bred amang the crisp springin' heather, they can fend for themselves wherever they gang. Oor very sheep are alloo'd to be the best in the market—oor lassies the wale o' the countryside. Time wad fail me to tell hoo weel the Whaups o' Durley hae gotten on. If I was a scholar I wad write a book aboot them—it wad be weel worth readin', I can tell ye.

" Dod, man ! sic ploys I've seen in the Glen, I canna come ower them a'. I can speak, like

the Yelpin' Stane, when I'm spoken to. Like it, I can speak back in my ain fashion; I can hear baith sides; but, say as they like, or what they like, I aye hae the last word; an' I stan' firm on my ain grun', like the Yelpin' Stane."